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Middle American Archaeology

The Greater Cultures

By Alfred M. Tozzer

FOR many decades the study of American archaeology was in a very nebulous state characterized, in many cases, by inaccurate observation, bold assumptions, and a general ignorance of the more scientific approach to the subject. These defects have, in great part, been remedied by a wider vision, a more careful training of investigators, more accurate observation, and a gradual tendency to place archaeology among the more exact sciences.

American archaeology has also suffered a certain stigma for its failure to produce a literature as its handmaiden with an accompanying chronology to give a certain vigor to its findings. It must be admitted that archaeological data have an inert quality, a certain spinelessness when unaccompanied by a more or less definite chronological background. The psychologists may be able to tell us why we must have dates accompanying objects of antiquity to make them seem interesting and of value, whether these objects consist of furniture, a piece of silver or glass, or specimens coming from the graves of our early inhabitants. Here we shall attempt to give one part of American archaeology an internal skeleton and thus to raise it to the status of a vertebrate.

It should be pointed out at once that the classification and nomenclature applied to European archaeology cannot be used for the New World. This is not due to the scarcity of the data, but to the fact that there are no metal ages in America. Iron, other than meteoric, was unknown before the advent of the white man, and smelting was not practiced except in certain regions on the western coast of South America, parts of Central America, and in Mexico. During practically all their history, the Mayas were unacquainted with the process of smelting and casting of metal objects. Bronze, the resultant of a deliberate attempt at mixing copper and tin, had only a very limited distribution in South America.

In the study of archaeology as a whole there are five elements of control: geology, palaeontology, stratigraphy, the development of types from cruder to more developed forms, and the distribution of these types by trade, the migration of objects far from their original place of manufacture. Geology and palaeontology may be disregarded here as the question of primitive man in America, in the real sense of "first," does not concern us. No attempt will be made to prove or disprove the much-discussed question of the presence of man in the New World in geologically ancient times. Stratification is of the utmost importance as showing successive occupations of the same site, each layer indicating in

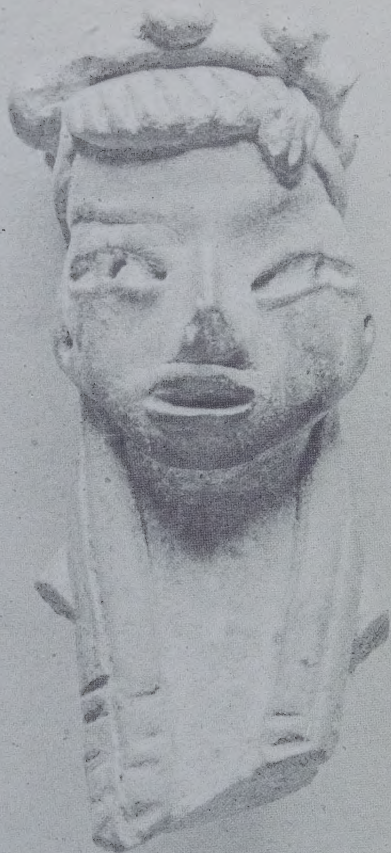
many cases a more or less distinct culture allied with a time-element and this approach has proved of the greatest importance in Middle American investigations in pre-history. Triangulations in the study of trade is the last of our elements of control. Red coral, for example, from the Mediterranean is found in graves of the early Iron Age in England. Dated Egyptian scarabs, found in Crete, were a great factor in establishing the entire chronology of the Aegean culture. The close association of objects in the same deposit prove that they are, in a sense, contemporaneous. This does not, of course, necessarily mean that they were made at the same time, but that they were deposited together.

We are beginning to realize the very wide extent of trade movements in the New World. With evidence of the existence of well-paved roads, the entire Middle American area seems to have been knit together. Mexico was united with the southern lands by great trade centers in Tabasco and Guatemala. There was also travel by water; Columbus on his last voyage met a large trader's canoe off eastern Yucatan. Heirloom pieces of carved jade, dating back several centuries, have been dredged from a great natural well, or cenote, in northern Yucatan. These are not later than the objects with which they are associated but, as a matter of fact, they probably were made several centuries before they served as objects of sacrifice. Gold figurines, definitely made in Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua and found in late Maya deposits, again help in the elucidation of a relative chronology. These trade relations within Middle America show movements extending over thirty degrees of latitude or almost 3,000 miles.

Nine-tenths of the objects encountered in archaeological investigations come from graves. There is a universal belief in the presence of a soul after death, and this spirit needs sustenance as in real life. Food and drink fill vases and other vessels often far more elaborate than those used in secular life. Figurines of pottery and of metal carry messages to the other world. It was the melting up of grave deposits of gold figurines from lower Central America which kept Spain alive for many centuries. The lure of gold was behind the entire colonization of much of the New World and this gold was all a part of the furniture of graves.

Looking at Middle America as a whole, there is nothing yet found which shows any evidence of a pre-agricultural horizon, a way of life marked by "gathering" and hunting. The earliest cultures that have been found are by no means primitive either in the sense of "first" or in the acquired meaning of "crude." They probably do not represent a single development, as was formerly thought, but they have certain features in common; hand-made types of clay figurines and well developed varieties of pottery. At one time the theory was advanced that the spread of these Archaic cultures was coextensive with the spread of agriculture, starting on the high plateau of Mexico, in the artificial cultivation of the *teocintli* grass into maize. Botanical historians then moved the origin of maize to Guatemala, and now they have advanced a theory that corn originated in South America, worked northward and, mixing with tripsicum, produced *teocintli*.

Fig. 1 Four Archaic Clay Figurines, Valley of Mexico.
Photographs by Clarence Kennedy.



Central Mexico

ARCHAIC CULTURE. The most definitely established stratification in the New World occurs in central Mexico. Four and five meters below the present floor of the Valley of Mexico, in some cases under many feet of volcanic deposits, and on the hills surrounding the Valley, the Archaic cultures have been found. They are characterized by clay figurines (Figs. 1 and 2) and pottery of many types, together with other objects of clay and some of stone. The figures, mainly of women, are modeled by hand and often show striking individuality. Remains of paint still exist on some of them. We know nothing concerning the ethnical or linguistic background of this people. Dr. Vaillant in his intensive study of this culture has determined several different levels which, in the main, can be grouped into Early Zacatenco, Copilco-Zacatenco, and Cuicuilco Ticoman. The earliest, Zacatenco I, he equates chronologically with the Archaic on the Guatemalan highlands, and with the earliest stratum (Mamon) at the great Maya site of Uaxactun. He places a tentative date of 100 A. D. upon this horizon. The latest of the Archaic in the Valley of Mexico he places about 400, and this is placed in the same period as that of Holmul I in the Maya area.

Fig. 2 Archaic Clay Figurine of a Dancer, Valley of Mexico. Height, 4 inches.
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.





Fig. 3 Pyramid of the Sun, San Juan Teotihuacan.

THE TOLTEC. There then follows the Toltec occupation on the plateau, the greatest of all Mexican civilizations. The great site on this level of development is that of San Juan Teotihuacan, with its two famous pyramids of the Sun (Fig. 3) and of the Moon and the amazing formalized court with its series of foundation mounds and the terrific temple of Quetzalcoatl, (Fig. 4). In this culture, the figurines are all made in molds and represent many types some with most elaborate headdresses. Vaillant has five different levels of this culture, the first and second equating with Uaxactun II (Tzakol) and Holmul II, III, IV. The very recent excavations of Dr. A. V. Kidder on the Guatemalan highlands in Maya territory have revealed many of the Teotihuacan types of pottery. These were probably objects of trade.



Fig. 4 Temple of Quetzalcoatl, San Juan Teotihuacan.
Detail of head of feathered serpent.

THE AZTEC. Following Teotihuacan V, ending about 1000, there is in the Valley an intervening Mazapan culture before we reach the Aztecs about 1200. They are the people who have received most of the credit in the popular mind for the early achievement in cultural lines in Mexico but they were comparatively late arrivals on the scene. They did not reach the shores of the lake, on an island of which they were later to build their capital, Tenochtitlan, until about 1325. They came as a wild hunting tribe from the north, remaining undisturbed until 1351 when they suffered defeat and enslavement at the hands of the Toltecs. They founded Tenochtitlan in 1364 but their period of expansion and preëminence did not begin until later when they gradually conquered practically all the peoples around them from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans. Figure 6 from the Nuttall Codex shows conquest by the Zapotecs who were themselves conquered by the Aztecs.

The latter held sway by the assessment of tribute. Figure 7 shows the semi-annual tribute demanded of the towns whose names are expressed in rebus form at the bottom and at the left of the picture. Even in 1519 under Montezuma, they held only a fraction of the territory that was included in the Toltec empire, and nearly every feature of their life was borrowed from the Toltecs. The Aztecs, starting with a democratic clan type of



Fig. 5 God seated on throne, Toltec Culture, Valley of Mexico.

Courtesy
of the Berlin Museum.



Fig. 7 Aztec tribute and the names of the towns paying it. Page from Mendoza Codex.



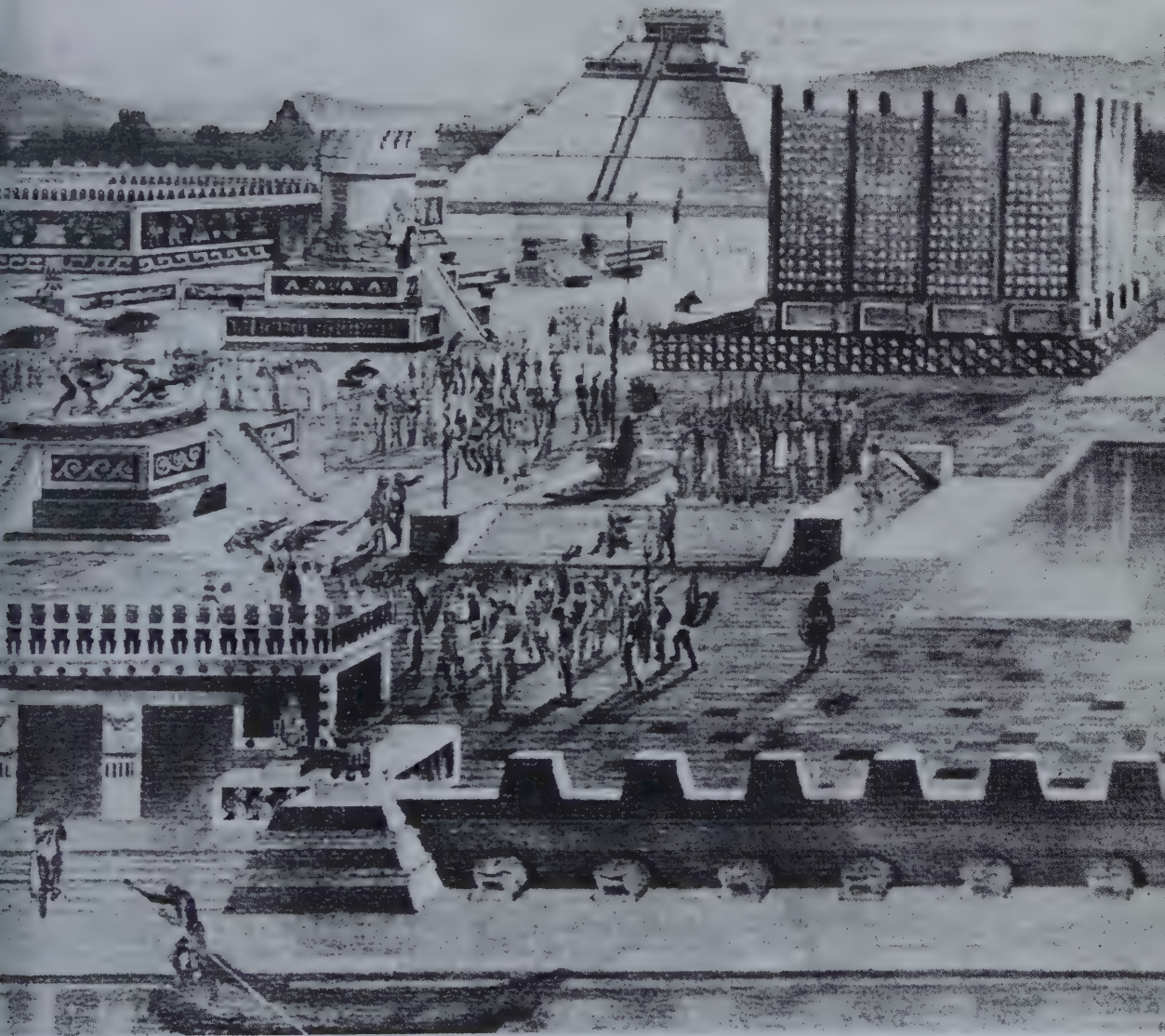
government, were well along their way to an imperialistic system, with authority (both religious and secular) invested in an inherited aristocracy. The head of this aristocracy was an individual called by the Spaniards, with some degree of truth, an Emperor. The conquered peoples served as a slave class and they also were the victims of human sacrifice.

Cortez was able to conquer the Aztecs only with the greatest difficulty. He availed himself of the hatred of the peoples held in subjection by the Aztecs, and with their help, he finally took Tenochtitlan and Montezuma.

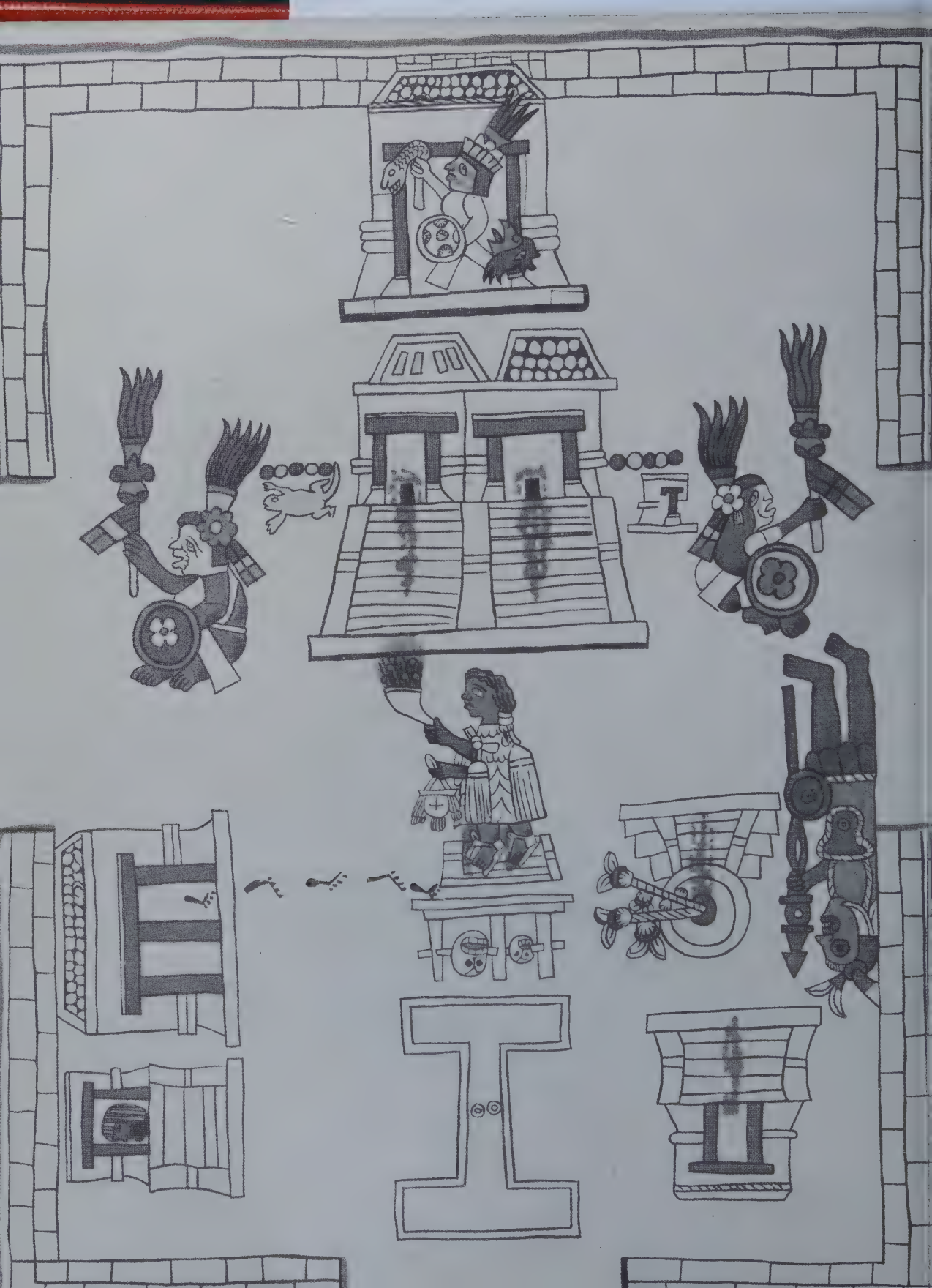
Fig. 6 Conquest by the Zapotecs. Nuttall (Zouche) Codex.



Fig. 8 The ceremonial center, Tenochtitlan. Reconstruction by Ignacio Marquina of Mexico.



Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.



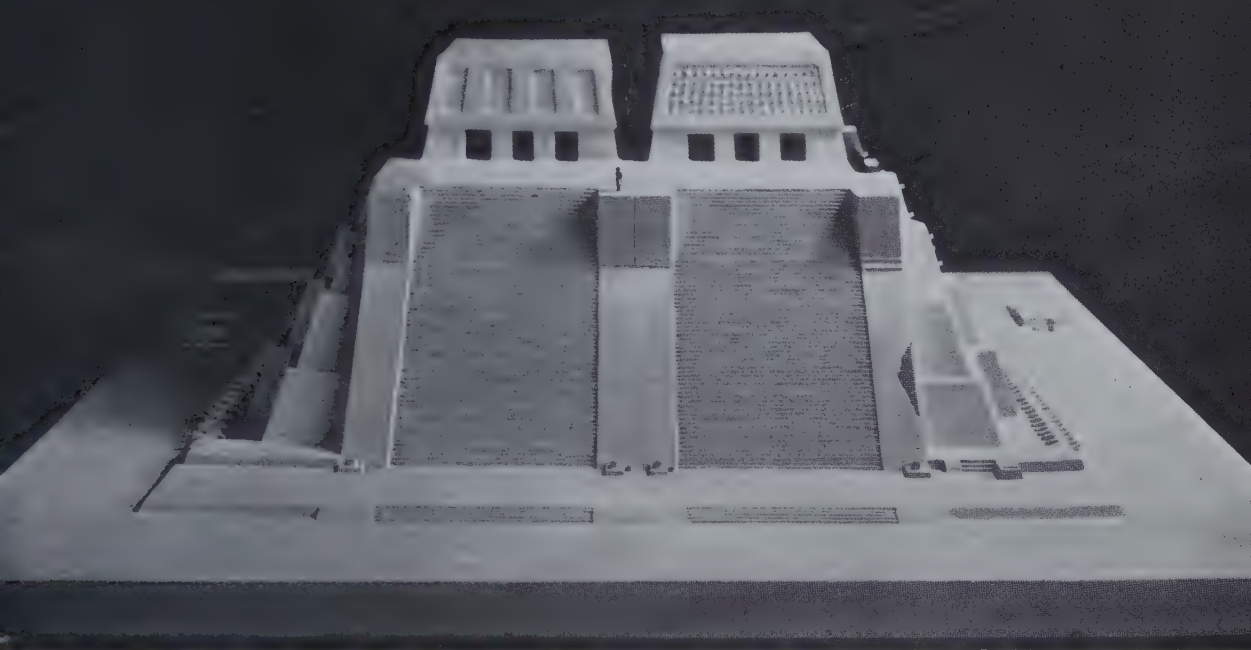


Fig. 10 Aztec temple, Tenayuca, Mexico. Model by Ichikawa, American Museum of Natural History, after Ignacio Marquina.

It is mainly from the early Spanish accounts and from their numerous manuscripts written on deerskin or agave fibre, that we know the character of the ancient Tenochtitlan as most of the buildings and temples were of wood. Figure 8 shows an attempt to reconstruct the ceremonial center of the ancient city and Figure 9 is a page from the Sahagun manuscript, dated shortly after the Conquest, showing the temple enclosure. The reconstructed model of an early Aztec temple at Tenayuca is shown in Figure 10.

Religion with its multitude of priestly offices was mainly directed to the forces of Nature, the sun and the moon. Their calendar, an inheritance of an earlier people, was mainly an attempt to read the wishes and to placate the numerous gods of their pantheon.

The Aztec art in stone is mainly monumental. Much of it deals with slaughter, or, as Charlot expresses it, "not physical beauty but physical pain and death." Figure 11 shows one of the smaller stone goddesses of death. Human sacrifice reached its greatest development among the Aztecs (Fig. 12). The hearts of the sacrificed victims were offered to the gods often in stone boxes or receptacles (Fig. 13). There was a god of the flayed skin of the victim of sacrifice, Xipe, whose mask is shown in Fig. 16. By human sacrifice it was believed that the life of those on earth was thus extended and prosperous times would come. An interesting monument, buried by the Catholic priests as a work of the devil, has lately been rediscovered (Fig. 14). It shows a terraced pyramid with a calendar

Fig. 9 Temple enclosure, Tenochtitlan. Sahagun Manuscript.

stone at the top. A remarkable rock-cut temple (Fig. 15) has also lately been discovered. It was evidently the headquarters of the religious Cult of the Dead Warriors associated with the eagle and jaguar.



Fig. 11 Aztec goddess of death, Coatlicue. Courtesy of the National Museum of Mexico.



Fig. 12 Aztec human sacrifice. Codex Magliabecchiano XIII. 3.

The Aztecs were wonderful craftsmen working jade and other hard stone (Fig. 16) and decorating masks, shields and other objects with the most delicate mosaic designs of turquoise, coral and obsidian. One of the finest and most beautiful Aztec bas-reliefs is shown in Figure 17. It has the date in the simple hieroglyphics of this people, 8 Cane (1487), and at the top there is a meeting between the "Emperors" Tizoc and Ahuitzotl when each cut his ear as a sacrifice and the blood dropped into incense burners with serpent handles.

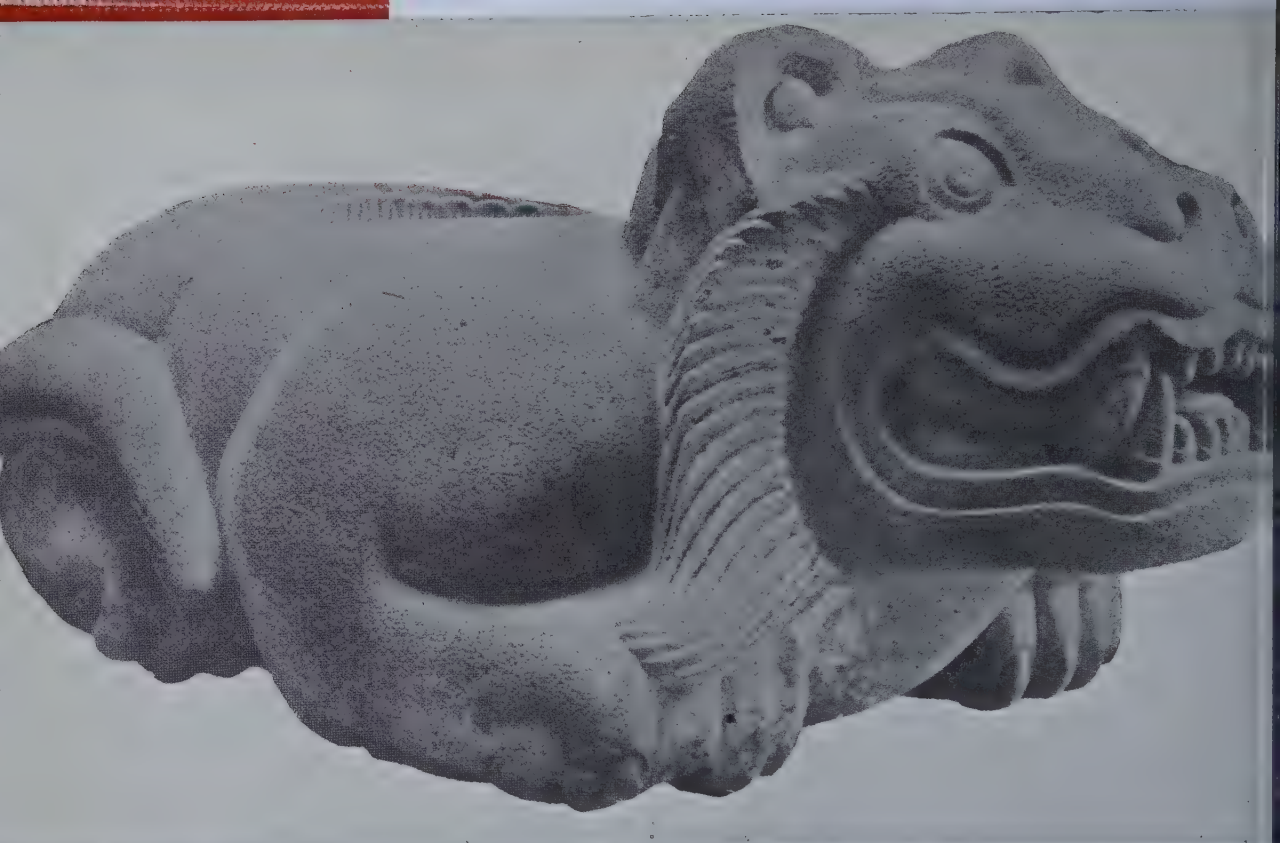


Fig. 13 Aztec stone box (*cuauhxicalli*) in shape of ocelot, to contain human hearts.
Courtesy of the National Museum of Mexico.

Fig. 14 Aztec "Piedra Nacional," showing a sun disk on top of a pyramid and the dates 1 Rabbit, 2 Reed (1506, 1507).





Fig. 15 Aztec rock-cut temple of the Jaguar-Eagle cult, at Malinalco, Mexico.



Fig. 16 Aztec stone mask of Xipe, God of the flayed skin. Courtesy of the British Museum.

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Fig. 17 Aztec stone carving, Date 8 Cane (1487) representing an ear sacrifice by the "Emperors" Tizoc and Ahuitzotl.







Fig. 19 Fresco: Temple of the Warriors, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. Showing a Maya village. Courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.



Fig. 18 Stela 8, Naranjo, Guatemala. Warrior-priest standing on back of prisoner-slave. Note hieroglyphics.



Yucatan and Lowland Guatemala

The Maya area in southern Mexico, Yucatan, and northern Central America is the other great center of influence. There are many important but minor cultures in Middle America which are being discussed by Dr. Lothrop. Here in the Maya region we have abundant evidence of an elaborate calendar as shown in the hieroglyphic inscriptions, the most remarkable intellectual achievement in the New World.

The material for the study of the hieroglyphic writing includes stone inscriptions carved on stelae (Fig. 18) and altars set up in front of the various temples, on the door-lintels of buildings, a few painted inscriptions, three pre-Columbian codices and the so-called Books of Chilam Balam, manuscripts written in the Maya language but with Spanish characters. These are in many cases copies of original documents reduced to writing after the advent of the Spaniards.

Up to the present time, the only part of this writing which has been deciphered has to do with the calendar based mainly on the sun, the moon and Venus. There were two



steps necessary in the elucidation of the time counts as shown in the hieroglyphics, the first of which was the determination of a relative chronology, the position of the different monuments in an inclusive series within the Maya area. This established succession of dates is definitely correlated with the stylistic development of stone carving and of architecture. We are thus, to a great extent, certain of the historical development of the Maya civilization. The second step was a correlation between the Maya and the Christian chronology. This is still a matter of controversy. The earliest dated monument yet found is Stela 9 at Uaxactun and in the Spinden correlation is dated 68 A. D.; in the Thompson-Martinez, it comes about 260 years later. The latter system will be followed here.

Fig. 20 Temple I, Tikal, Guatemala. With heavy roof-comb. Great Period. (Remains of stone facing can still be seen.)



Fig. 21 Temple I, Tikal, Guatemala. Showing design on roof-comb. Model by H. J. Spinden of structure shown in Figure 20.



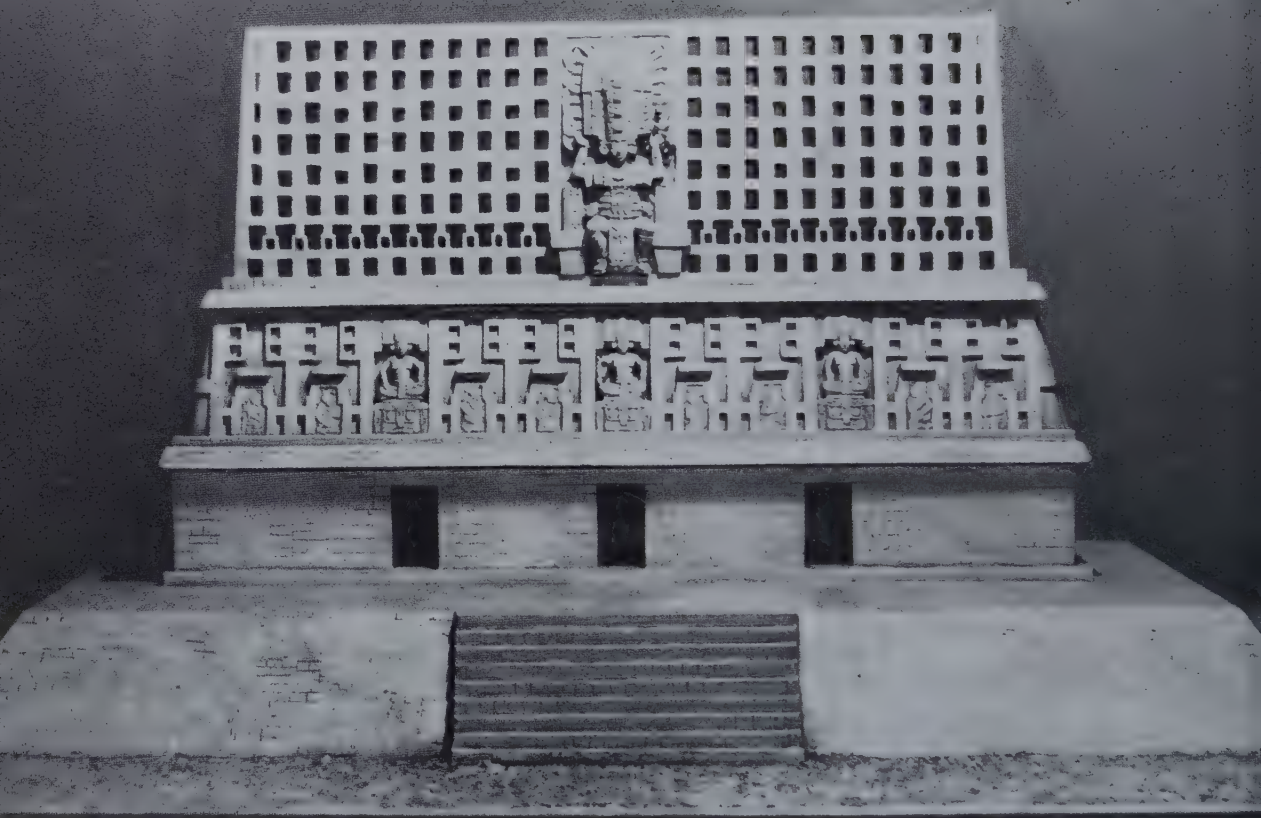


Fig. 22 Temple, Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico. Great Period. Showing perforated roof-comb and decorated upper zone. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.

The First Empire or, more properly, the Great Period of the Maya shows an early phase coming about the beginning of the Christian Era. This was a monochrome pottery, archaic, pre-stela horizon. In the department of the Peten, Guatemala, along the Usumacinta River, and in southern Guatemala and northern Honduras, great cities took root, civic centers, architectural complexes, oriented and lined with pyramidal temples, acropoleis, and great many-roomed structures, the latter, probably, the residences of the clergy.

The Maya civilization was a theocracy. There were clear class distinctions. The priests and some of the nobles alone had knowledge of the hieroglyphic writing. There were astronomer-priests who read the heavens for the purpose of learning the will of the gods as shown in the planets and their configurations. The unlimited amount of labor necessary in erecting the great stone structures meant a large servile class (Fig. 18). The earliest religious structures at some sites were of wood as were the houses of the people throughout the area and in all periods (Fig. 19). Among the earliest stone temples were

those on pyramids of great height, heavy solid structures with enormous towering roof-combs all to allow space for exterior decorations (Fig. 21). The walls were of great thickness with correspondingly very narrow rooms. There was a development to lighter roof structures, perforated and forming a frame-work on which the stucco or stone figures were placed (Fig. 22). The seemingly stone wall was often much like the stone, brick or tile veneer on modern concrete buildings. The stones were inserted into a mass of concrete, and the weight of the building came on the solid interior mass of lime-cement rather than on the actual stone of the veneer. The architect was thus left free to carve the stones set mosaic-like in the wall (Fig. 23). The wall in Figure 24 shows where some of the facing stones have fallen. The roof, except at the beginning and at the end of Maya history, was supported by the corbeled vault. This was also used for gateways (Fig. 24).

Symmetrically placed in front of the temples or in ceremonial courts were lines of stelae, each often with an "altar" (Fig. 26) in front. The stone lintels were also often carved (Fig. 27). These monuments carried most of the design shown in the Great Period. Art was architectural. Maya stone carving was essentially two dimensional – the bas-relief on the front and back of a stela often flowing around each side of the monument (Fig. 28). There was little carving in the round. The designs on these stones were generally hieroglyphic inscriptions and human figures, very badly proportioned, and overcrowded with decorative features. Maya art is not placid. There are no plain surfaces; it is confusing and over-elaborate. The designs are mainly taken from life forms, human

Fig. 23 Monjas, Chichen Itza, Yucatan, showing detail of stone construction.

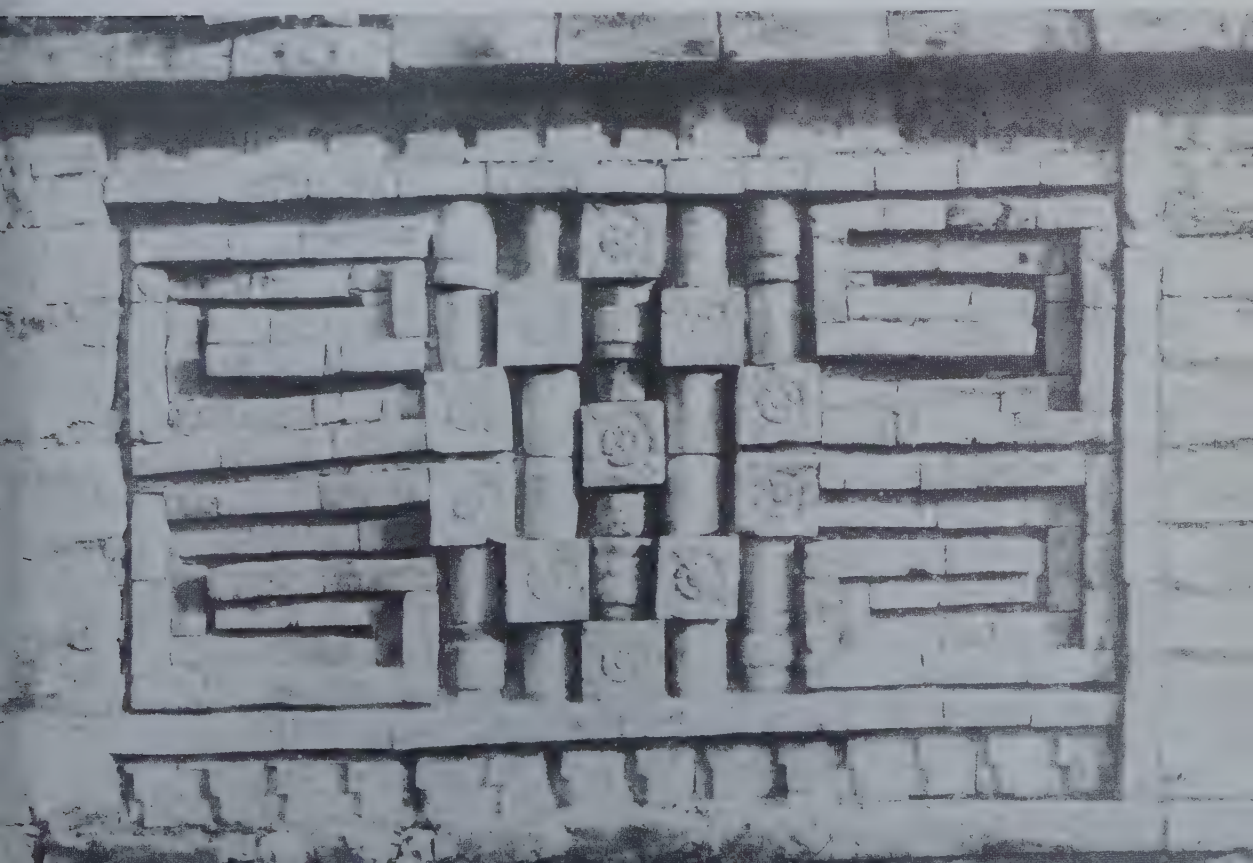




Fig. 24 "Governor's House,"
Uxmal, Yucatan. Detail.
Showing vault used as gate-
way, but now closed. (Note
mosaic decoration, mask de-
sign, and stone veneer.)



Fig. 25 Stela N, Copan,
Honduras.





Fig. 26 "Altar" P, Quirigua, Guatemala. Seated figure in jaws of monster.

Fig. 27 Lintel 26, Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico. Showing a worshiper offering a jaguar head as a headdress to a priest or god.







Fig. 28 Feather design on a side of a stela, Quirigua, Guatemala. Courtesy of T. A. Willard.

and animal. Figure 29 is an unusual example in its lack of embellishment. It must be remembered that color was abundantly used both on the monuments and on the walls of buildings. Polychrome thus helped to make clear the intricate designs. Tools were of flint and obsidian, never of metal.

Before the end of the Great Period, about 1000, a movement northward into Yucatan had been made and, probably contemporaneous with the end of the major occupation in the south, the so-called Second Empire had sprung up in the north. At the base of the peninsula are two centers of building activity, the Bec region (Fig. 30) and that of the Chenes, (Fig. 31) which may have been halting places in the trek northward. Figure 30 shows an interesting building where there is a development of towers, each a pyramid temple with its stairway, now useless and reduced to an element of design. Figure 31 is an excellent example of the over-crowded façade decoration common in the north. Here the common mask design is seen at its best, each doorway being the open mouth of a mask.



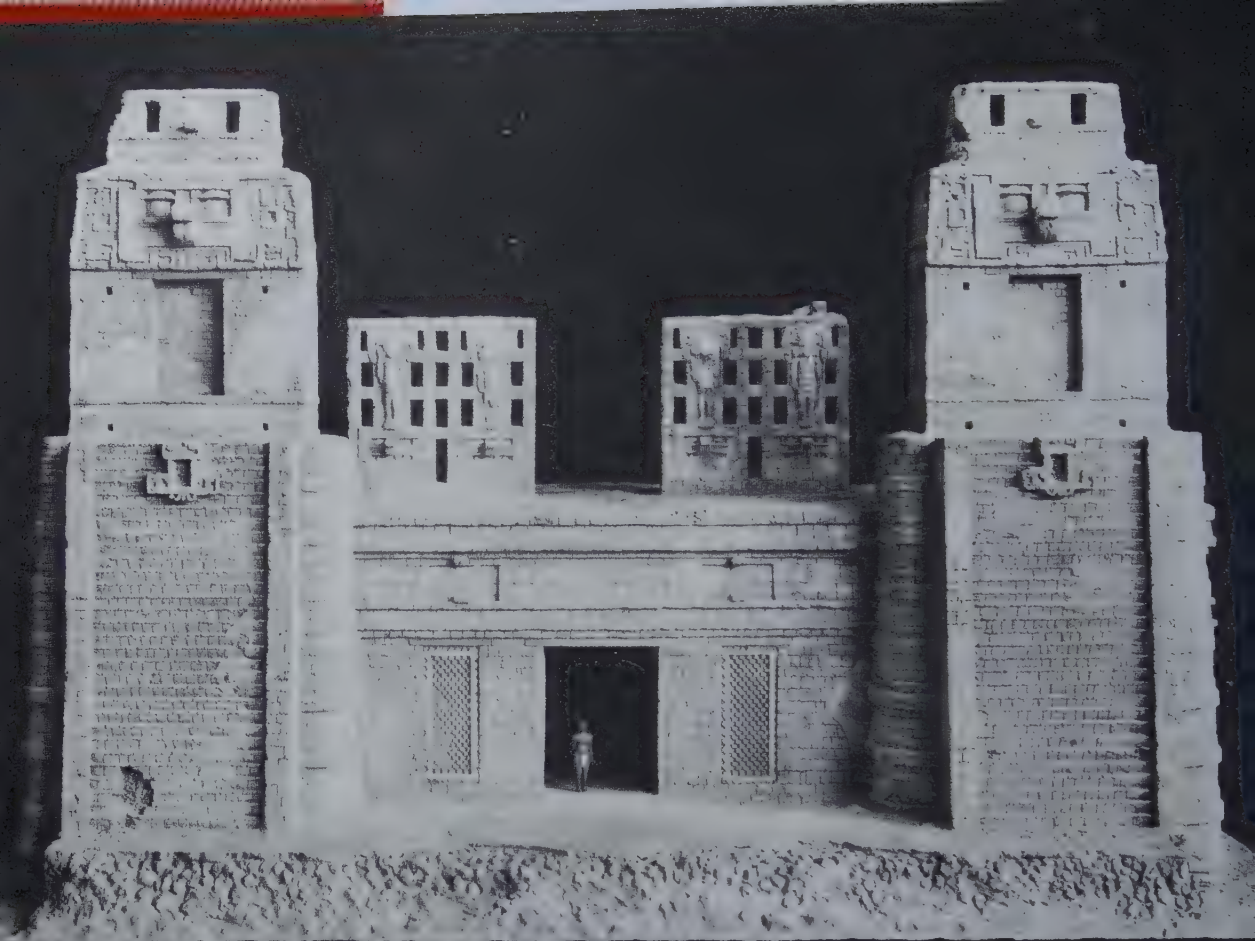


Fig. 30 Temple at Rio Bec, Campeche, showing lateral towers as small temples.
Model by Ichikawa, American Museum of Natural History.

The Second Empire flourished mainly in the region of the low hills (the Puuc) in northern Yucatan. Here were lighter buildings and fewer pyramid temples with the famous sites of Uxmal and Labna, and in this period also came the earliest structures at Chichen Itza. The typical building in this area was comparatively simple in its decoration (Fig. 32), using the split column in connection with the fret and the typical Maya mask (Fig. 24). The restraint in the design improves the whole as a composition. In some cases, at least, a wooden prototype was probably used (Fig. 33). One of the largest temples in Yucatan was the Adivino at Uxmal (Fig. 34) with the present stairway built over a previous facing with a head under the later stairway showing tattooing (Fig. 35), projecting from the wall. Figure 36 shows a pure Maya building at Chichen Itza. It has the last phase of the roof-comb together with a flying façade which carries the mask design.

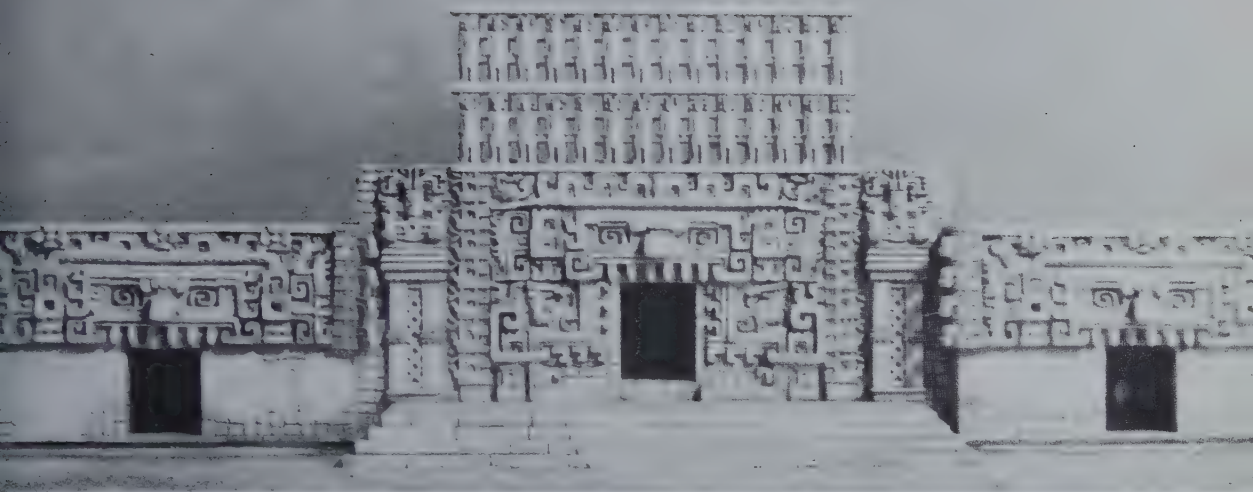


Fig. 31 Palace, Hochob, Campeche, showing stucco façade, perforated roof-comb and mask design. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.

About the year 1200 a decided Mexican influence was felt in northern Yucatan. The various dynasties of the country had become involved in civil war and one of the great centers introduced Mexican troops. It is probable that there had been a previous peaceful penetration of Mexicans or "foreigners" from the south. The conquest of Chichen Itza by

Fig. 32 Kalupococh, Yucatan. A typical building of the Second Empire in the Puuc, with decoration of split columns and frets. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.

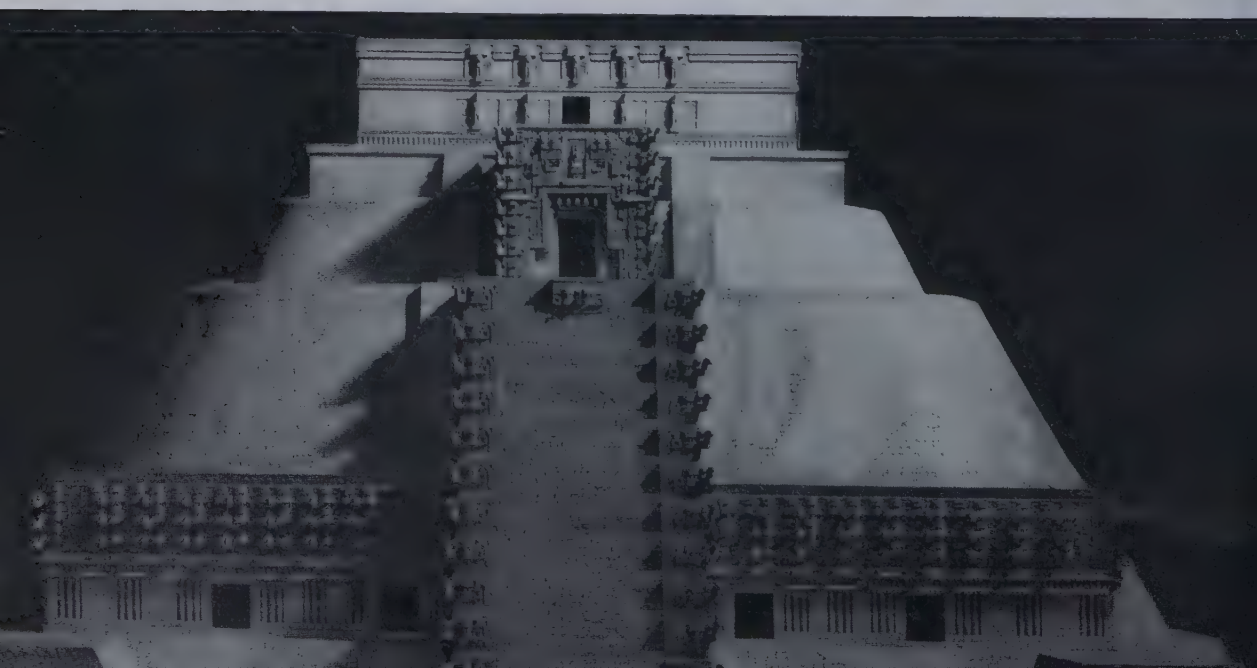




Fig. 33 Eastern range, Monjas, Uxmal, Yucatan. Showing copy in stone of wooden prototype. (Note fall of veneer stones.)

Fig. 35 Façade decoration of human head in the jaws of a serpent found under the later stairway in Figure 34. (Note the tattooing and the septum of the nose pierced to hold an ornament.) →

Fig. 34 El Adivino, Uxmal, Yucatan, showing a later temple and stairway built over the previous pyramid and building at its base. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.





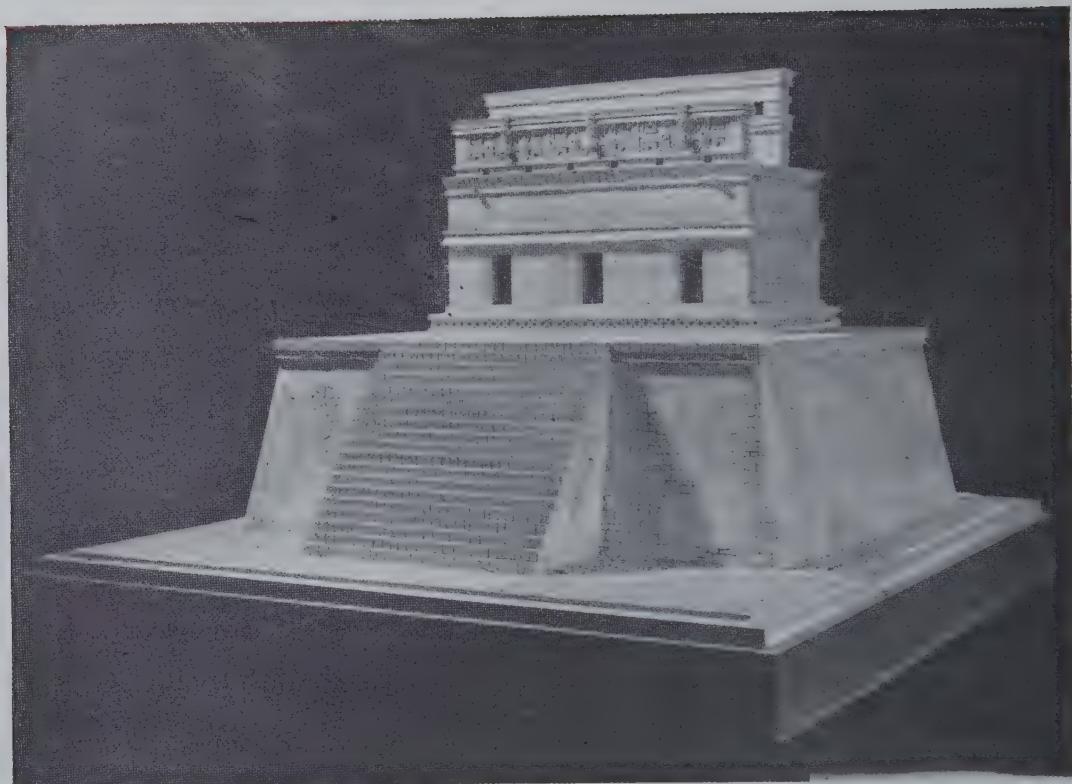


Fig. 36 Casa Colorada, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. A late pure Maya building showing a wall type roof-comb and flying façade. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.

Mexicans is actually shown in frescoes, bas-reliefs and gold plaques worked in repoussé (Fig. 37). Most of the greatest buildings at Chichen Itza date from the Mexican period and show many new un-Maya features both in architecture and in design. This Yucatan city has the longest *recorded* history of any city in the New World.

Figure 38 shows an air-view of this site and Figure 39 is the Castillo, a typical temple of the Mexican period, with four stairways, serpent heads at the base of one, serpent columns supporting a colonnade and silhouette stones on the roof. The Jaguar temple on top of one of the walls of a great Ball Court is shown in Figure 40. This type of court dates from the Mexican occupation, although the game was played in slightly different courts in the Great Period. This pastime was essentially like our basket-ball but among the Mayas and the Mexicans it had an important religious significance. One of the latest buildings at Chichen was the famous Temple of the Warriors (Fig. 41) with its colonnade through which the stairway to the temple passed.

It is at this site that the Cenote of Sacrifice is found, a place of pilgrimage for the ancient inhabitants of Yucatan and into which they threw men and women and their most valua-

Fig. 37 Center of a design in repoussé on a gold plaque. Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. Showing Mexican warriors attacking a Maya Chieftain. (Note differences in dress and in arms.)

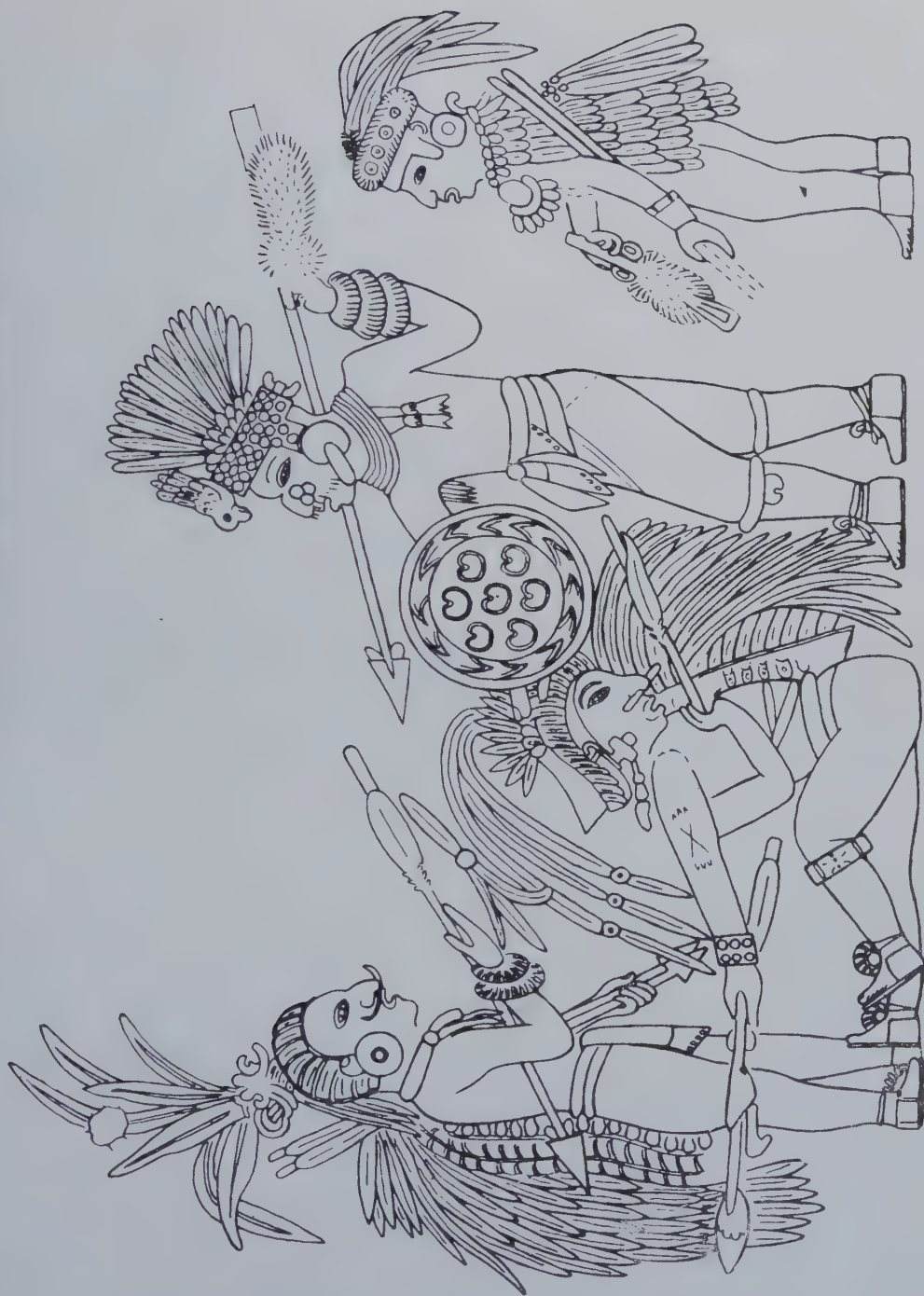




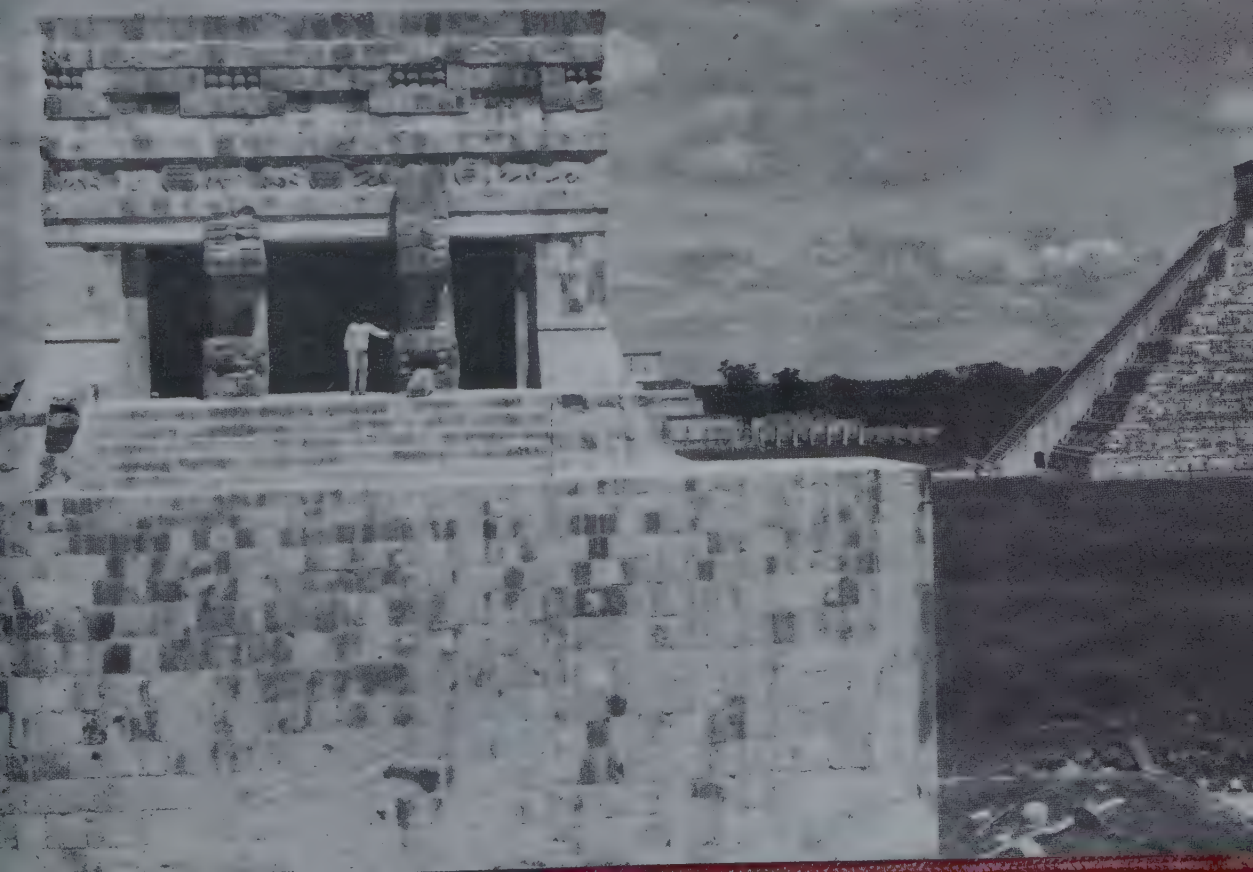
Fig. 38 Chichen Itza, Yucatan. An air view. Photograph by Charles A. Lindbergh. Courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.



Fig. 39 El Castillo, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. Dating from Mexican period and showing serpents at base of stairway and serpent columns.

Fig. 40 Jaguar Temple on east wall of Ball Court, Chichen Itza, Yucatan, showing serpent columns and ball-ring in the vertical-sided court, characteristic of the Mexican period. (Two views.)





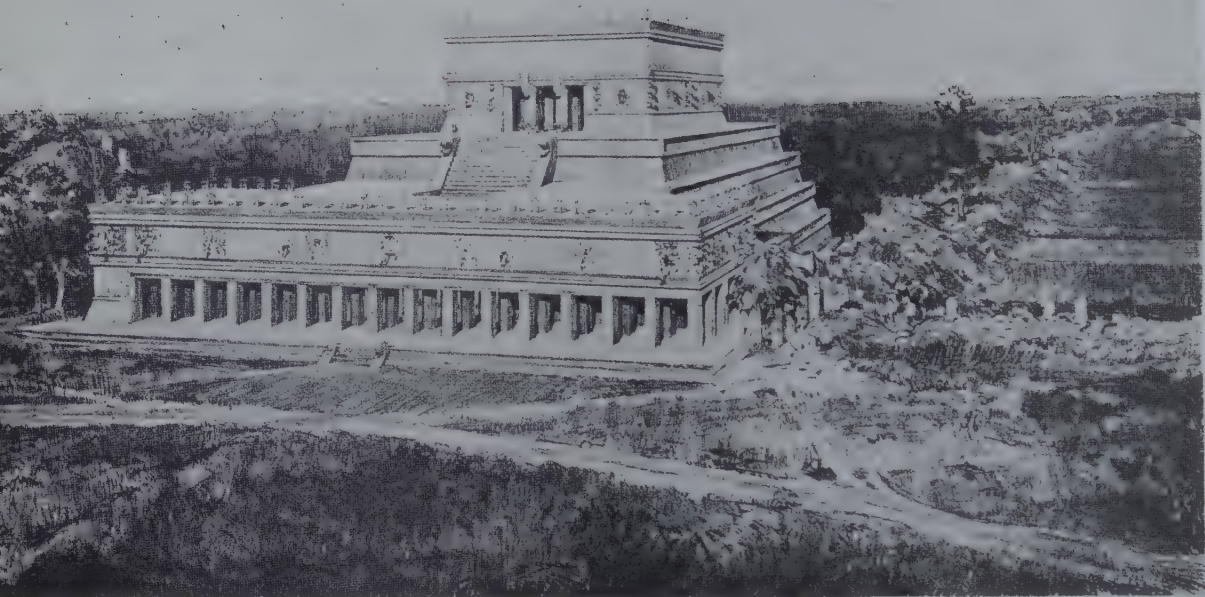


Fig. 41 Temple of the Warriors, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. Late Mexican period. Reconstruction by Kenneth Conant. Courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

ble possessions. This act was in behalf of the rain gods. Prayers were offered for "a good season" and the victims of sacrifice were supposed to act as bearers of this message to the other world. Figure 42 shows some of the many carved jades recovered in dredging this ancient well when all the traditions and early accounts were verified. The last period in Maya history is seen in the cities on the eastern coast of Yucatan (Fig. 43). The buildings were smaller, simpler, and in many cases the rooms had flat ceilings and most of the design was stucco.

There are several dark spots in the picture which has been drawn. We do not know what led many of the Mayas to abandon their great cities in the south and move northward. The exhaustion of cultivable land may have been one of the reasons, the drying up of the water supply another. We are also ignorant as to the events which led up to the fall of this civilization about 1450. Civil war, the injurious effects of the presence of foreigners or Mexicans and, in all probability, epidemics of various kinds were all possibly contributory.

The darkest spot, however, is our ignorance of the beginnings of the Maya peoples. It is certain that those responsible for this civilization were American natives, and that their development is not due to any influence outside the New World. The impossibility that such a culture could have grown up *in situ*, as it were, is always brought forward by

those who think they see superficial similarities between the Mayas and certain Mongolian peoples. The presence of jade or jadeite was a favorite argument used by the sinological enthusiasts but native sources of jade have lately been found in Guatemala and, furthermore, there is a slight chemical difference between the American and the Asiatic varieties. The calendar alone, which no one has tried to prove originated outside of America, shows the mental equipment of the Mayas, the presence of genius in their midst. A few naturally gifted individuals, a knowledge of agriculture, and a good environment are probably alone responsible for the beginnings of the Maya civilization.

There must, necessarily, have been long centuries of slow beginnings and small achievements by the early Mayas before they burst upon the world about the beginning of the Christian Era with a highly developed civilization, characterized by great cities, an elaborate art and architecture, a highly organized theocracy, a remarkable astronomical knowledge, and a calendar system. Marginal corrections were applied to take care of the

Fig. 42 Jade amulets dredged from the Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza, Yucatan. Some were made in the south during the Great Period and others undoubtedly originated in Mexico. About $\frac{1}{2}$ actual size. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.



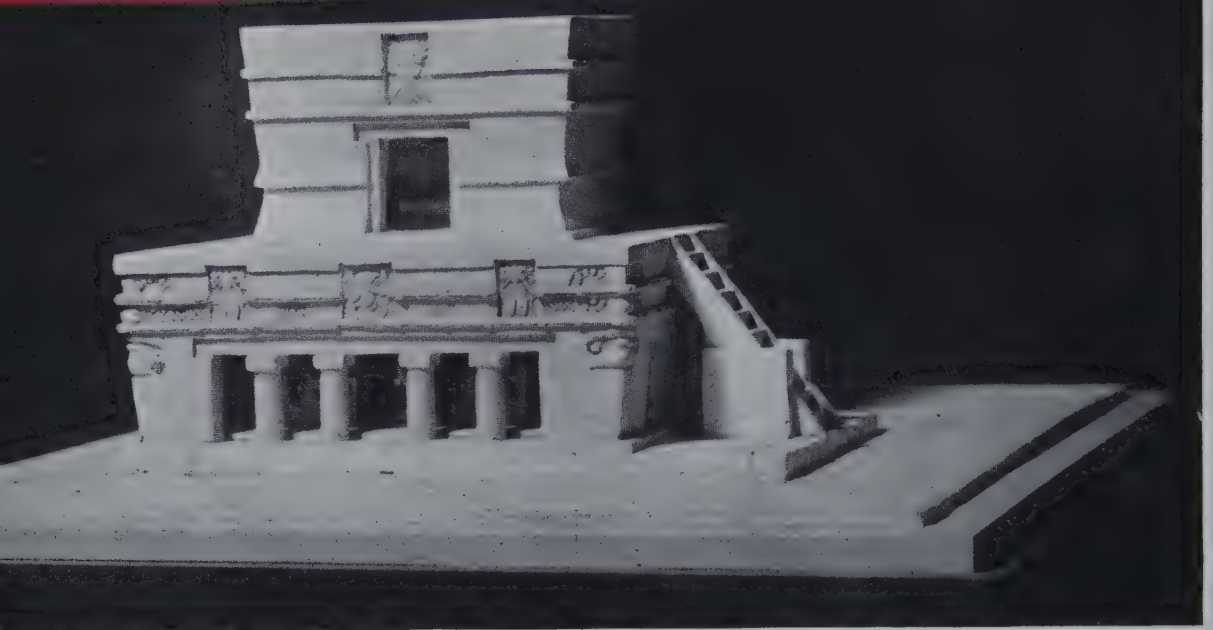


Fig. 43 Temple of the Murals, Tulum, Quintana Roo, Yucatan. A late Maya temple with frescoes on inner wall of vestibule. Model made under the direction of H. J. Spinden.

variation on the Maya year and of the true solar year, a means more accurate than our method of interpolating days. It should be pointed out that it was not until 1582 that the Julian day was invented, which corresponded to the Maya day count.

With a definite chronology thus established and its day-for-day correlation with the Mexican cultures, there is every reason to hope that, with the study of the migration of objects and stylistic contacts, there will come a time when the sequences of all the cultures of the New World will be attached to a truly historical fabric. In fact, such an attempt has lately been made in tables prepared by Dr. Lothrop and Dr. Vaillant in connection with a paper by Dr. Kroeber appearing in "The Maya and Their Neighbors". Here they show ceramic sequences covering the southwest and the southeastern part of the United States through the various cultures of Mexico and Central America, and southward as far as the southern highlands of Peru.

Finally, as the result of modern research, a certain readjustment of values comes out clearly: the small contribution made by the Aztecs to the ancient cultures of Mexico, the large part played by the Toltecs with their far-reaching empire and their appearance in an early Maya horizon, and the far greater primary impetus and development of a great civilization with astronomical knowledge and a calendar by the Mayas who probably handed all this on to the other peoples of Middle America.

If there are included in our history the present natives of Yucatan who still speak the Maya language and the Lacandonones of Guatemala, also a Maya people, who still carry out many of the pre-Columbian religious practices, a definite historical background has been supplied to American history, starting somewhere before the beginning of our era and extending in an unbroken line for more than 2000 years.

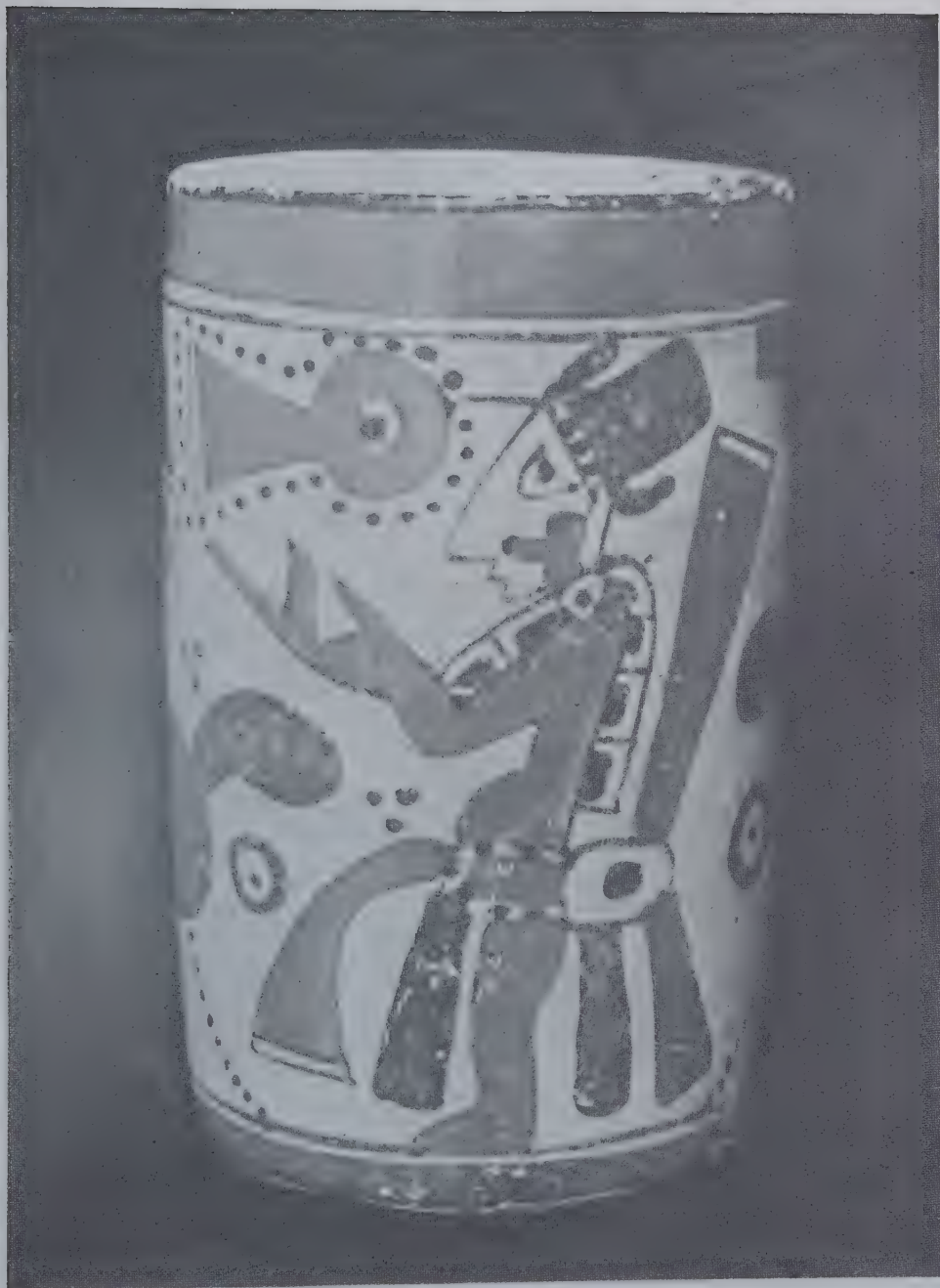


Fig. 44 Polychrome vase. Lake Yojoa, Honduras. Height, 6½ inches.
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.



Fig. 45 A statue carved by the Huastec, northernmost Mayas, who live near Tampico, Mexico. Height, 62 inches. From the collections of the New York Historical Society in the Brooklyn Museum.

The Lesser Cultures

By Samuel K. Lothrop

WHAT we know about the natives of Mexico and Central America is extremely unbalanced because archaeological studies have centered in certain regions which held out unusual promise of immediate advances in knowledge or have yielded material obviously suitable for museum display. Thus in central Mexico the Aztec and their predecessors have received concentrated attention because historical records are ample and ancient remains are both easily accessible and unusually instructive. A second magnet has been the lowland portion of the Maya area which has attracted exploration and investigation on account of the spectacular architecture, the monumental sculptures and the numerous inscriptions. These taken jointly have yielded important information on the growth of culture. The State of Oaxaca in southern Mexico also has been a prime center of research on account of imposing buildings and richly furnished tombs. In each of these areas of intensive study, interpretation has been in the hands of able students and the advancement of knowledge has been correspondingly great.

In contrast, throughout most of Mexico and Central America, historical records of ethnological value are meager and the ruins of ancient cities, often built of wood or adobe and thatch rather than of stone and mortar, are comparatively unimpressive. Yet the peoples whom we cannot place in the first flight of Middle American culture often produced craftsmen outstanding in the minor arts. In our museums today, many of the objects which we rank at the top artistically, are attributed to these lesser people or to groups about whom we know little more than their names. That this distinction as well as the merit of provincial craftsmanship was recognized by the Aztec is shown in their tribute rolls (Fig. 7), for the provincial jewelers, potters and weavers under Aztec control were forced to contribute lavishly to the splendor of Tenochtitlan.

Eastern Mexico

HUAXTEC ART. It has long been recognized that the Huastec, who dwelt in the vicinity of the Panuco River near what is now the Tampico oil fields, were an offshoot of the Maya with a markedly different culture. Their isolation from other Maya tribes they said was due to the scandalous behavior of an ancestor of the whole group who had been forced to leave after discovering the secret of fermentation and the delights of alcohol. The culture of the Huastec lacks the highly specialized features of other Maya tribes such as the calendar and vaulted buildings. Art forms are distinct but cannot be termed primitive. Their highest expression is in statues carved in the round which have

the dignity of great simplicity (Fig. 45) in contrast with the typical florid Maya reliefs (Fig. 28). A pleasing style of polychrome pottery also should be mentioned.

TOTONAC ART. The southern neighbors of the Huastec were the Totonac tribe who lived near the present port of Vera Cruz in the State of the same name. Although Cortés established the first European settlement in Mexico in their territory, comparatively little is known about them and even the language they spoke has not been determined. Archaeological remains occur in abundance, but no definite study has been made of them and our understanding of chronology is thus inadequate. It is quite probable that some of the specimens in our museums now attributed to the Totonac may in reality be the products of earlier peoples.

The Totonac region is one of mixed cultural strains. There are distinctly local art styles. In addition, Maya influence is shown by the presence of architectural buildings (Fig. 46)

Fig. 46 Restored model of pyramidal temple at Tajin, State of Vera Cruz, Mexico. There are 364 niches which formerly contained statues. The width at the base is 115 feet.
Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.





Fig. 47 Flat stone head with slots in the base and back. Use unknown. Totonac Culture (?).
Height, 12½ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

and assemblages, stelae carved in relief, the use of writing and a calendar. Furthermore, the central plateau contributed to Totonac culture for centuries before the whole region finally yielded to Aztec domination.

There are three curious types of stone carving in the Totonac area about which there has been much unfruitful speculation. All are found, although in decreasing numbers, as far south as Guatemala and El Salvador. One of these is a flattened head, carved on

both sides, with a tenon or slot on the neck suggesting that it was not complete in itself (Fig. 47). A second is a paddle-shape stone carved in relief (Fig. 48). A third is a "yoke" of stone, often grotesquely sculptured, which supposedly was placed across the throat of a victim about to be sacrificed (Fig. 49). Yokes have been found in cities of the Maya Old



Fig. 48 Totonac (?) carving from Vera Cruz, Mexico, representing a turkey. Height, 18 inches. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

Fig. 49 Stone "Yoke." Totonac.
Height, 17 inches. Courtesy of
the American Museum of Natu-
ral History.



Empire and therefore presumably were made as early as the Ninth Century, A. D.

Ceramic styles of the Totonac and their forebears are varied. Outstanding are a polychrome ware, an incised cream ware and a highly polished orange ware. Modelled effigy forms are common in pottery and among the most charming of Mexican products are the laughing heads from Vera Cruz (Fig. 50). Also the localized style found in the vicinity of Papaloapam, with features often emphasized in bitumen, at times achieves the rank of true portraiture (Fig. 51).



Fig. 50 Laughing head of pottery. State of Vera Cruz, Mexico. Height, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

OLMECA ART. Students of Mexican archaeology in recent years have grouped together a large number of carvings to which the name Olmeca has been attached. The Olmeca, now extinct, were one of the Mexican tribes about whom very little is known today. According to legend, they appeared on the Mexican scene in proto-historic times as did the Toltec. Their traditional home was the southern portion of the State of Vera Cruz and adjacent territory further inland but they may have expanded to the south and west. Their language is unrecorded. At one time it was thought to be Nahuatl or Otomi but at present it is regarded as Mixtec.

Ancient stone carvings in the styles attributed to the Olmeca have been found chiefly in the Mexican States of Vera Cruz, Tabasco, Guerrero and Oaxaca; some of these styles were also copied by Maya sculptors in Yucatan and northern Guatemala. Small objects



Fig. 51 Pottery head in the style of Papaloapam, State of Vera Cruz, Mexico. Height, $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

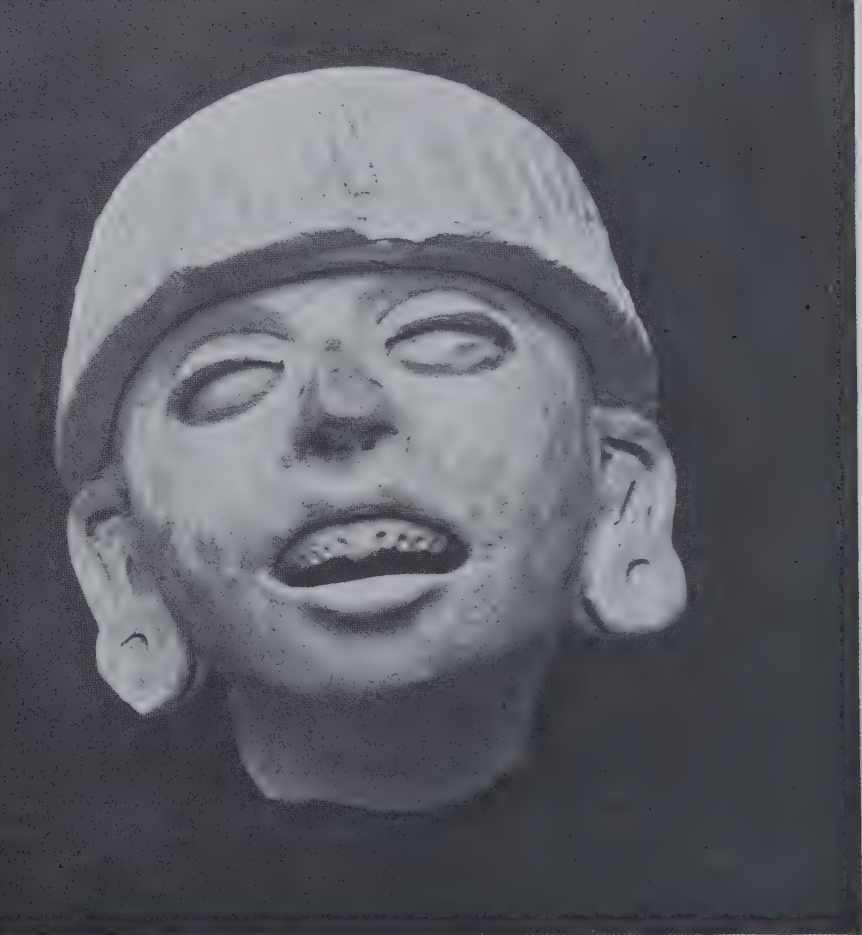


Fig. 52 Pottery head with open mouth. Height, 5 inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

passed southward in trade as far as Panama. Olmeca carvings include colossal stone heads (some of them over twenty feet in circumference), large statues in the round, ceremonial axes of jade decorated in relief and jade ornaments of several distinct types (Figs. 54 and 55).

The unity of Olmeca styles has been recognized for only a few years but fresh discoveries tend to confirm it. Most specimens in our museums have been found under unrecorded circumstances. Therefore, there is no definite estimate of their age but the present consensus of opinion is that they are relatively ancient as compared to surviving aspects of better known cultures. In fact, the Olmeca may have been among the first carvers of jade in Central America.

To the eye trained in European canons of art, Olmeca sculpture is especially pleasing because it tends toward simple symbolism and broad treatment. At the same time, great force of line is often apparent and the handling of planes has much in common with our own sculpture.

Architectural and ceramic phases of Olmeca culture are little understood today but we may look forward to great advances in knowledge as a result of investigations now being carried out jointly by the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution.

Western Mexico

TARASCAN ART. The country lying southwest of the central Mexican plateau was occupied in the Sixteenth Century by a number of tribes speaking several different languages. The most important of these, or at any rate, the group whose name is of greatest archaeological significance today were the Tarascans. Their capital was Tzintzuntzan, "the Place of Humming Birds". Various aspects of their culture and beliefs are preserved in early Spanish writings and we are told that they were especially skillful in the making of feather mosaics — unfortunately a fugitive medium of which few examples still survive.

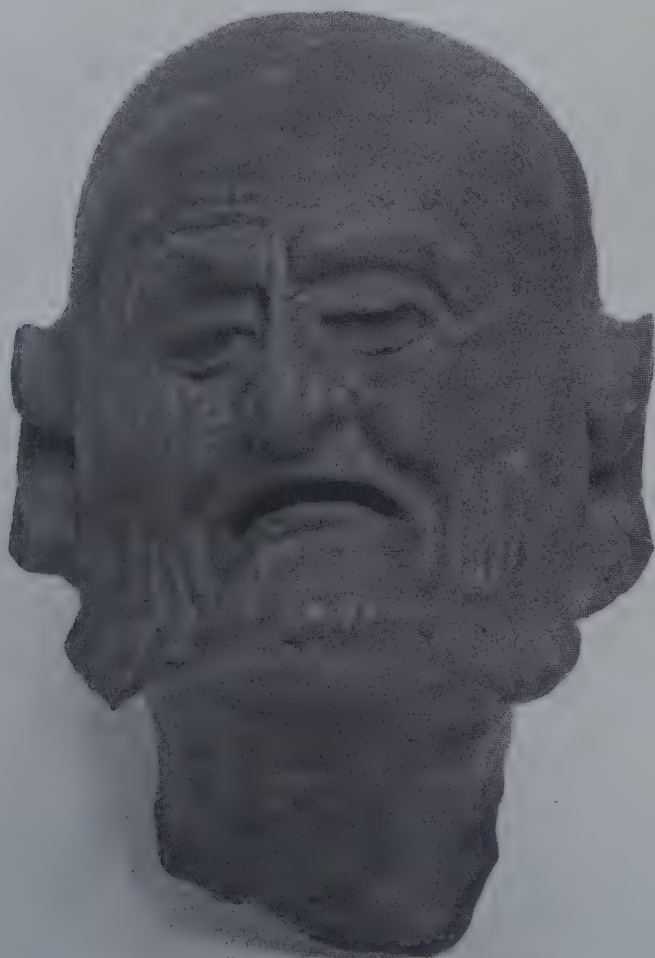


Fig. 53 Pottery head of an old man. Olmeca (?). Height, 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.



Fig. 54 Olmeca jade pendant. Southern Mexico. Enlarged to about twice the actual size. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

Fig. 55 Olmeca stone mask. Probably from Oaxaca, Mexico. About actual size. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.







Fig. 57 Tarascan pottery dog. Height, $7\frac{1}{8}$ inches; length, from tip of nose to tip of tail, $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

The art forms now called Tarascan come from the various portions of the States of Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacan and Nayarit, an area much larger than the Tarascan tribe has occupied in historical times. The outstanding characteristic of the products of the so-called Tarascan region is freedom from religious symbolism. Unlike most aboriginal artistic expressions, this appears to be largely a folk art, imbued with great vitality and at times with humor. Effigy vessels are particularly common, representing men, women, children and dogs, often with considerable attempt at realism (Figs. 56 and 57).

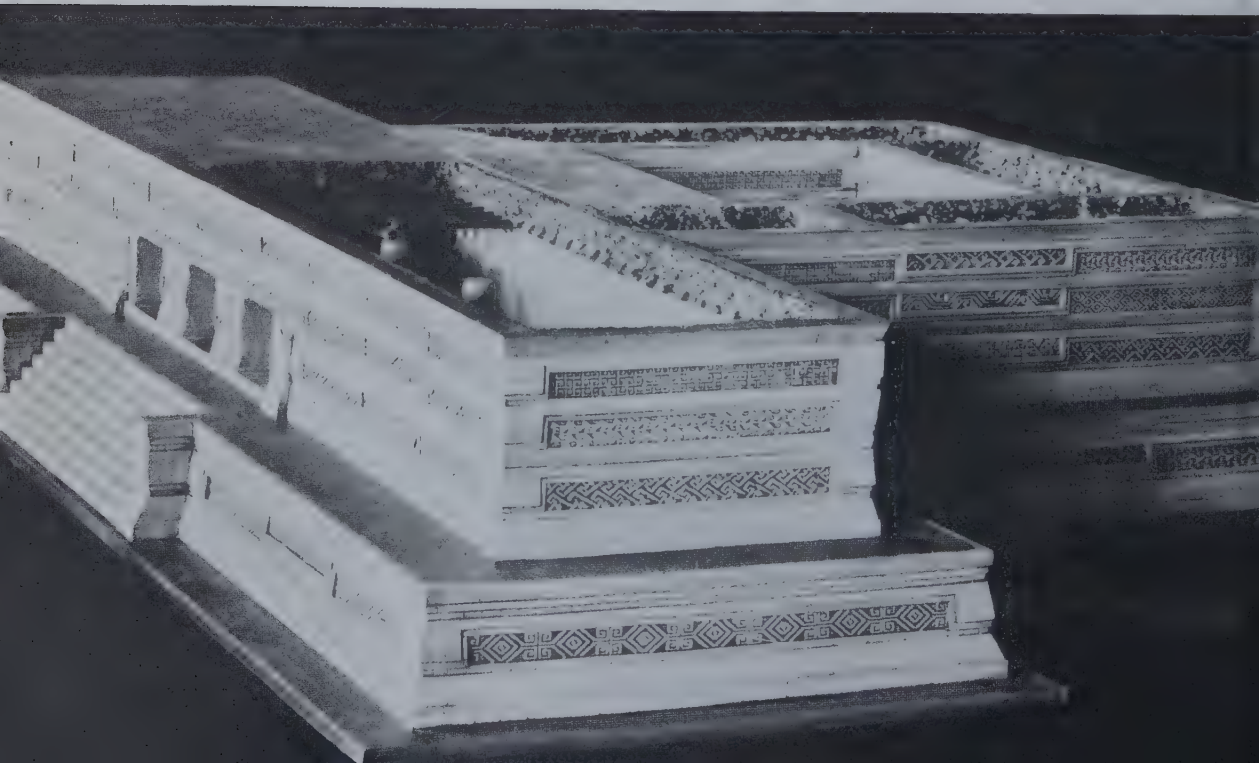
Fig. 56 Tarascan pottery figure of a Warrior. Height, 15 inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

Southern Mexico

ZAPOTEC ART. The principal native tribe of southern Mexico was the Zapotec, whose handiwork can be traced back for many centuries before the Spanish Conquest, chiefly through excavations at the ruins known as Monté Alban and Mitla. Monte Alban once was a truly great city, resting on a mountain top overlooking the Valley of Oaxaca. It consists of carefully oriented temples, pyramids, mounds, tombs, house foundations and courts, which have completely obliterated the natural contours of the mountain. Until recently vegetation obscured the site but clearing and excavation have revealed stone masonry, large bas-reliefs and richly furnished tombs. As in other parts of Middle America, the custom of enclosing an edifice within a subsequent and larger structure has enabled archaeologists to determine the growth of architecture and other arts.

Monte Alban, in spite of its antiquity, has not produced a culture which can be called primitive. The first of the five epochs now recognized yields well-made pottery and great slabs of stone on which are carved figures of dancing men. These slabs, set in masonry walls, in style recall Olmeca art. Some of them carry dates which, when deciphered, may be among the oldest in the New World. A second epoch produces new pottery forms related to types of proven antiquity in the Highlands of Guatemala and El Salvador, while a third period shows contacts with the Maya to the south and the Toltec to the north. A fourth phase carries local styles to a new height and is marked by flamboyancy in the elaborate funeral urns so typical of Zapotec culture. In a fifth period, the Zapotec

Fig. 58 Model of a "palace" at Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.



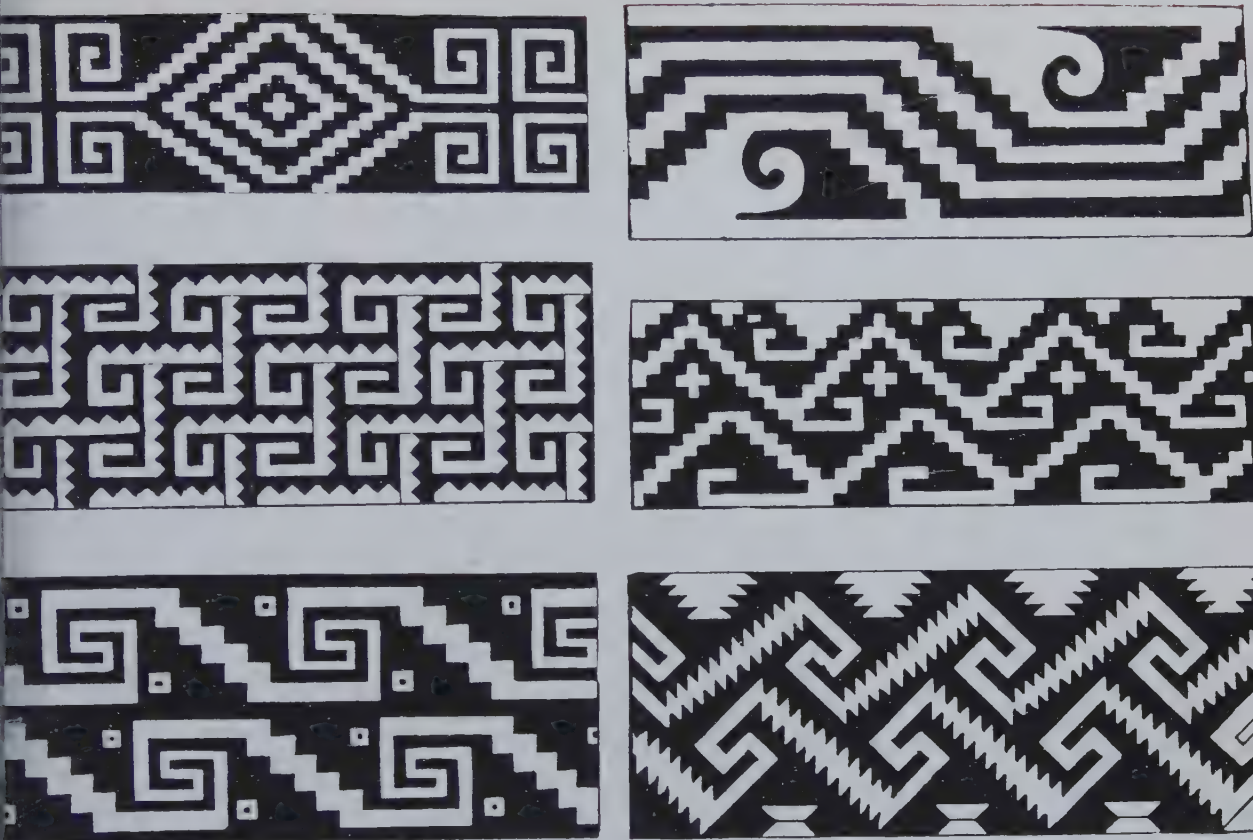


Fig. 59 Geometric decoration built into the walls at Mitla. (After W. H. Holmes.)

were driven from Monte Alban by the Mixtec and their chief center became Mitla which was conquered by the Aztec in 1494.

The city of Mitla, constructed of cut stone and rubble, is perhaps the best preserved architectural unit in Mexico outside of the Maya area. There are four great "palaces", each consisting of rooms surrounding a rectangular court (Fig. 58). These units are set on lofty substructures and the principal entrance is approached by broad stairways. Walls are adorned with geometric patterns carved in relief (Fig. 59). Each stone was cut to fit its individual place, carrying but a small portion of the whole design. There are said to be approximately 80,000 carved units in a single court. Other edifices at Mitla were decorated with elaborate frescoes, now largely destroyed. On a nearby hill are the remains of a massive fortress.

Under and in front of the principal buildings at Mitla are a number of huge tombs built in the form of a cross. Many of these have mosaic walls of stone. Similar tombs have been found at other sites in Oaxaca. Those which had not been robbed contained typical Zapotec funeral urns.



Fig. 60 Zapotec effigy urn.
Height, 17 inches.
Courtesy of the University
Museum, Philadelphia.

Zapotec art, as represented in our museums, consists chiefly of pottery and jade. Pottery for the most part is unpainted and boldly modelled. The funeral urns of which we have spoken are elaborately constructed effigies representing gods and men in regalia and also various kinds of animals (Figs. 60 and 61). Surrounded and obscured by these figures are simple cylindrical receptacles which contained the ashes of the dead.

Jade ornaments occur in large quantity and infinite variety. The use of a tubular drill to cut circles or (when tilted) semicircles is characteristic (Fig. 62.) The jade itself is not of such fine quality as is found in the Maya area nor was it so ably sculptured (Fig. 42).

MIXTEC ART. The Mixtec were neighbors of the Zapotec who also dwelt in the State of Oaxaca. Presumably the Mixtec conquered the Zapotec and drove them from Monte Alban, for the fifth and final period at that site yields only Mixtec remains. The Mixtec produced a highly specialized and delicately painted polychrome pottery with a varnished surface, closely allied in style to the famous polychrome ware of Cholula, used by Montezuma in his household.

Mixtec jewelry of gold and silver (which was copied by the Zapotec) represents not only their supreme artistic achievement but the apogee of metallurgical craftsmanship in the New World. The enthusiastic descriptions of the Conquerors are fully borne out by the delicacy and skill shown in surviving examples. While the arts of alloying, plating, sheathing, soldering and welding were doubtless understood, the finest pieces evidently were cast by the *cire perdue* process (Fig. 64). This consists of modelling the desired form in wax, enclosing it in a mold and then replacing the wax with molten metal. Many of the tiny filigree objects which appear to be constructed of wires soldered together were actually cast as a single unit.

Highland Guatemala

THE MAYA. The Classical Maya of the lowlands have already been described by Dr. Tozzer; other Maya tribes, however, who lived in the mountains of Guatemala, in Honduras and in Salvador, produced surprisingly different cultural strains. In the Highlands of Guatemala, the Spaniards found several powerful political groups, each with its own capital and ruling dynasty. Local records, which go back many generations before the Conquest, recall a long series of bloody battles and embittered wars filled with acts of treachery.

From an archaeological point of view, the obvious difference between the Highland Maya and their brethren who dwelt on the plains is that the former, living in a volcanic region, could not hope to rival the architectural triumphs of the latter. Large cities

Fig. 61 Zapotec effigy urns. Height, $7\frac{1}{4}$, $7\frac{1}{2}$ and $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches (from left to right).
Courtesy of the University Museum, Philadelphia.



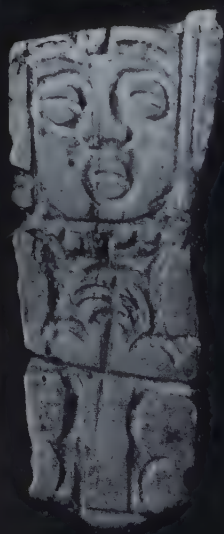
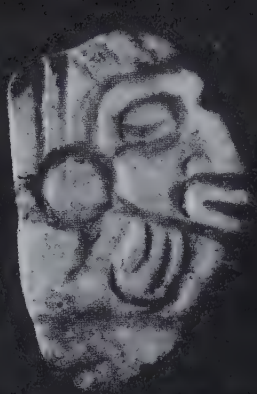




Fig. 63 Mixtec gold nose-ornament. Oaxaca, Mexico. Width, $1\frac{11}{16}$ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

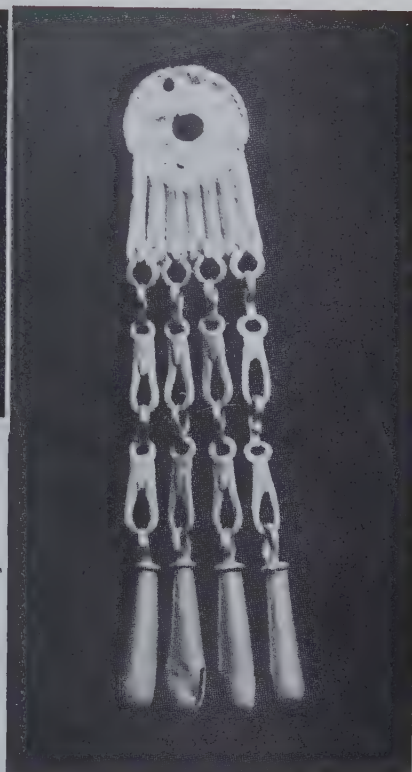


Fig. 64 Mixtec gold pendant. Oaxaca, Mexico. Length, 3 inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.

indeed existed but little remains of them today. On the other hand, the mountains produced jade, metal, obsidian, quetzal feathers and other materials which could only reach the low country by trade. Specimens for cross-dating the two areas thus exist, which indicate that the Maya had been established in the mountains for as long a period if not longer than they had occupied the plains.

Another factor affecting the Highland culture was that the region lay on the direct route between Mexico and Central America, whereas the plains of the Peten and Yucatan were isolated. As a result, outside influences had readier access to the Highlands of Guatemala. At the earliest period now reached by archaeology, contacts with El Salvador may be noted. In later times, connections were established with Mexico and manufactured products of the Toltec, Totonac, Olmec, Zapotec and Mixtec reached Guatemala.

Environment does not explain the almost complete absence in the Highlands of the stelae cult found in the Peten nor of large carvings and inscribed dates. Perhaps the so-called Long Count was never prevalent in the mountains although the basic formula of the Maya calendar was known and is still used in remote mountain villages.

Fig. 62 Zapotec jade pendants. Oaxaca, Mexico. Actual size. Photograph from the American Museum of Natural History.



Fig. 65 Carved stela. Santa Lucia Cozumalhualpa, Guatemala. Height, 12 feet (after Habel).

THE PIPIL. In the Eleventh Century, according to legend, there were two great outpourings of people from the central plateau of Mexico; one caused by several years of drought and one by the final collapse of the Toltec regime. As a result, various Mexican groups moved slowly southward into Central America as far as Costa Rica. The southern enclaves did not preserve their material culture and, as a result of intermarriage, they took on the local art forms. In Guatemala, however, and to a lesser extent in El Salvador, their handiwork can be identified. Especially noteworthy are large and elaborately sculptured stone slabs which are dated in the Mexican rather than the Maya system (Fig. 65). Pottery types also can be attributed to the Pipil (Figs. 66 and 67).

Fig. 66 Pipil carved pottery. San Salvador, El Salvador. Actual size. Collection of the late Jorje Lardé.



Fig. 67 Pipil carved pottery. Esquintla, Guatemala. Actual size. Rossbach Collection.

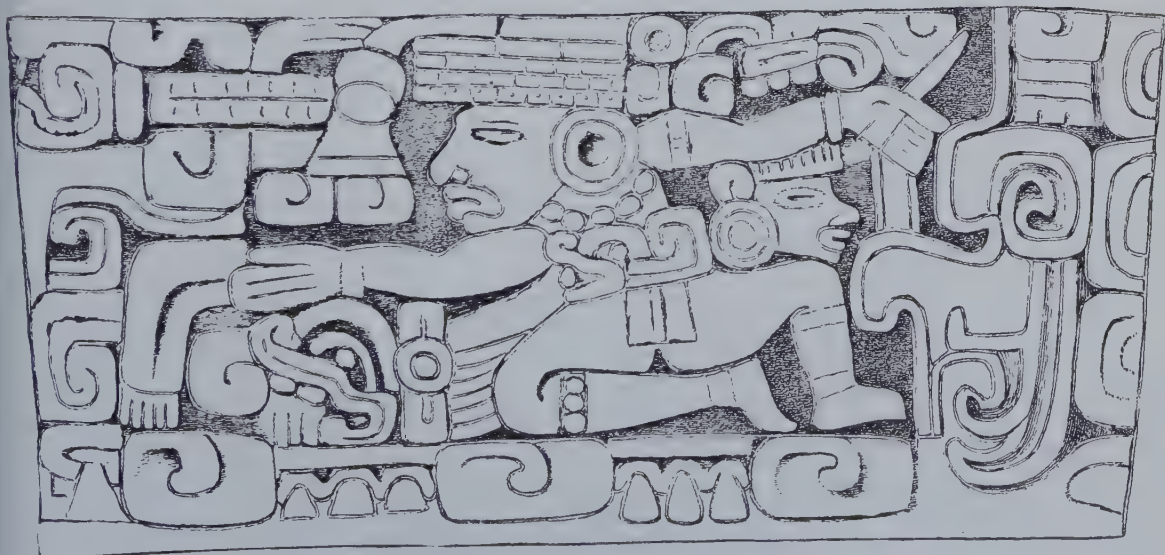




Fig. 68 Carved Maya jar. Mexicanos, El Salvador.
Collection of Mrs. Lilly de Jongh Osborne.

Honduras and El Salvador

THE MAYA. Although the previously mentioned Pipil were politically dominant in the western half of El Salvador and certain areas in Honduras in the Sixteenth Century, the Maya had previously been established there for a long time and a large portion of the archaeological material can be attributed to them. These were the southernmost Mayas and, as their geographical location suggests, their art was provincial. Large stone sculptures and carved inscriptions are rare except at Copan in Honduras, but there was a pleasing development of polychrome and of carved pottery extending across the continent with little change in local styles (Fig. 68).

Fig. 69 Cast gold ornament from the Province of Veraguas (vicinity of Soná), Panama. Height as is, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design.





Fig. 70 Beaten gold breast ornament. Province of Coclé, Panama. Width, about 8 inches.
Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

THE LENCA. The central part of Honduras and most of eastern Salvador were occupied by the Lenca Indians at the time of the Conquest. Not much is known about them although it is suspected that their language is of South American type. They built large

Fig. 71 Pottery vessel of Usulután ware, Zacualpa, Guatemala. Width, about 8 inches. Courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.



cities of which little remains today except the stone foundations of now destroyed adobe walls. Several stone fortresses exist which encircle the summits of steep hills. Research in the Lenca area promises to be fruitful.

THE PRE-LENCA. The type of problem often faced by the archaeologist in Central America is well exemplified by the term "Pre-Lenca". We apply it to a people of whose racial and linguistic affiliations we are ignorant but of whose existence we are certain because we can distinguish in part their material remains. In this case, it is clear that we are dealing with an important group, who had something to do with the origin of the Maya and other cultures, but until excavations can be carried out at a spot which will tell the story, we can only state an archaeological problem.

To technical archaeologists, the Pre-Lenca exist materially as "Usulután ware". This is a peculiar but distinctive kind of pottery (Fig. 71), marked by decoration in a black pigment which is fugitive and often fades underground. The first examples were found nearly twenty feet below the surface near the town of Usulután. Soon afterwards, fragments were found in a layer of humus buried by volcanic ash ranging in depth down to several hundred feet. Then typical Maya remains were discovered in the upper part of this ash, which, by the way, represented many volcanic eruptions.

More direct links with the Maya soon developed. Usulután ware was discovered at Maya sites in British Honduras and the Highlands of Guatemala in conjunction with admittedly very early Maya artifacts. More recently, the bottom of the great Maya city of Copán has yielded a large amount of this unusual pottery.



Fig. 72 Polychrome jar. Bolson, Costa Rica. Height, 11½ inches. Courtesy of the United States National Museum.

Nicaragua and Costa Rica

THE CHOROTEGA. Most of the Pacific watershed of Nicaragua and the northwestern portion of Costa Rica were occupied by tribes generally known as Chorotega. Linguistic relatives dwelt in southern Mexico but it is not known when they split from the main group or in which direction the migration took place. According to tradition, however, the Chorotega had been in Nicaragua a very long time. Although they created no enduring architecture of stone, they enjoyed a well developed culture which included a knowledge of writing. At the same time, they were cannibals because, as they told the Spaniards, human flesh was even preferable to turkey, and they kept their captives in cages until properly fattened for consumption. As their land possessed little gold, the Spaniards sold most of the Chorotega as slaves in Panama and the West Indies.



Fig. 73 Polychrome plate. Province of Coclé, Panama. Diameter, about 13 inches.
Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Chorotegan art is best known through a brilliantly painted polychrome pottery (Fig. 72), of which large collections exist in various museums. They also had a specialized style of sculpture, characteristically portraying nude figures on pedestal bases, which may total a dozen feet or more in height. Although certain pottery designs have their counterpart in the art of the Maya and other northern tribes, the large statues find their closest affiliation in South American cultures. The Chorotega of Costa Rica had access to a now unknown supply of jade. Many small ornaments are found, which derive their beauty from the color of the stone rather than from mastery of design.

Eastern Nicaragua is almost completely unknown to archaeologists. Stone carvings have been recorded but they are not of Chorotegan style. In general, culture was primitive and basically of South American type.

THE GUETAR. The central highlands of northern Costa Rica and the plains sloping down to the Atlantic were occupied in the Sixteenth Century by several small tribes. Archaeological remains, which are uniform, are known by the name Guetar. This region may be regarded as transitional between Central American and Isthmian culture. Pottery shows the influence of both Chorotega and Chiriquí styles. There was, however, a highly developed type of stone carving which extends southward to Panama.

Panama

CHIRIQUÍ. The southern portion of Costa Rica and adjacent territory in Panama produces a very distinctive culture which takes its name from the province of Chiriquí. About eighty years ago, the Panamanians discovered that there were vast cemeteries of stone-lined graves which contained ornaments of gold. The result has been a treasure hunt which continues to this day. Countless gold ornaments have been destroyed; at one time the Bank of England was melting about £10,000 worth annually. Many gold pieces have survived, however, and huge collections of pottery have reached our museums. Although these great collections have, of course, been studied, no technically competent archaeologist has more than briefly visited Chiriquí and really very little is known about this culture.

VERAGUAS. East of Chiriquí lies the Province of Veraguas. This was once the private property of the Columbus family who take their present title from it. During the Colonial period, Veraguas was noted for its gold mines, which were never fully developed owing to the opposition of the still defiant Indians. It is only recently, however, that the gold ornaments (Fig. 69) found in graves have been commercially exploited. Perhaps this is because the graves are very deep and lack a well marked shaft, so that a special technique is necessary to discover and open them.

Although the area of Veraguas is small, the culture is completely unlike that of Chiriquí or Coclé which flank it. Pottery, for the most part, is unpainted. Metal was cast in great quantity. Gold objects usually contain a large amount of silver and much of the so-called gold is in reality a gold-silver-copper alloy gilded by the *mis en couleur* method, which involves destruction of the baser metals on the surface by immersion in acid.

COCLÉ. East and southeast of Veraguas is another small local culture which takes its name from the Province of Coclé. This region was the first in the New World where the Spaniards secured a really large amount of loot in gold (Fig. 70). In the early Sixteenth Century many native chiefs were tortured until they disclosed the graves of their ancestors. This was a profitable business because the rich Coclesanos were buried with their wives, retainers and all their property. Three hundred and fifty-five pounds of gold were taken from the burial of a single chief.

Archaeologists have not found anything on a similar scale but have opened some very big graves, one containing twenty-six bodies. With these were several hundred pieces of pottery, many ornaments of serpentine, agate and gold as well as two big emeralds. A large part of the pottery is of a colorful polychrome ware, marked by complex and graceful patterns (Fig. 73).

Panama is the bridge over which once passed the basic population of South America. Long ago primitive tribes must have penetrated the Isthmian jungles or cruised along the sea coasts. In later times, counter migrations took place which filled the Atlantic seaboard as far north as Honduras with peoples of South American speech who retained much of their ancestral culture. The Isthmus then for untold centuries has carried the interchange of culture between the American continents, but archaeologists have not as yet detected early phases of these mass migrations.

This brief survey cannot attempt to create a detailed picture and we have limited our text to brief comments on the outstanding characteristics of the more important groups. The complexity of the problems which face the archaeologist are not yet fully understood, for each project of research reveals new aspects of culture. Enough is known about the natives of Central America, however, to indicate that their manner of life was far from primitive, while their craftsmanship was of such high order that we exhibit their material remains in our art museums today.

